

# Oriental Philosophy

THE STORY OF  
THE TEACHERS OF THE EAST

*by*

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED IN DEEP GRATITUDE TO  
NICHOLAS AND HELENA ROERICH  
WHOSE INSPIRATION LED ME TO  
THE BEAUTY THAT IS ASIA



## TO THE READER

This work is finished and passed on to you, my friend, in the hope that it may give at least a glimpse into the endless fascination of the Philosophies of the Orient. In a book of this character, it would be difficult to give more than an Introduction into the Wisdom of Asia—and I am too deeply aware of the many omissions necessitated by its form. It has but sought to touch the lingering fragrance of the Garden of Asiatic Contemplations, and to express an appreciation of the Call to the Liberation of the Spirit voiced by these Wisemen of the East. If this work serves to turn you to further study of the Words of the Sages Themselves, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

Numerous are the spiritual and inspirational debts we contract in writing a book. It would be impossible to cite them all. But this work would remain incomplete if I failed to express my appreciation to the following:

To my mother, for her constant help and encouragement since my childhood.

To the scholars and orientalists whose selfless labors have brought new light to the Ancient Sources and whose works I have consulted and quoted.

To Nicholas and Helena Roerich, who gave me so generously from their vast knowledge of Asia: one of the beloved words of Asia is *Guru*, teacher; in the privilege

of my association with Nicholas and Helena Roerich I have learned the beauty and deep implication of this word.

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And finally, reader and friend, must we not all express our appreciation to the Ineffable One, by Whatever Name He has manifested himself through all times.

## INTRODUCTION

Guarded by the mighty summits of the Himalayas, the spaces of Asia lie mysterious and beckoning. There, in the ebb and flow of millenniums, man first began life. There he first beheld the sun and moon and stars in the conundrum of their inevitable course. There he called out to the awesome silences of the vast desert. There he stood humbled before the unconquerable effulgence of the Himavat, the veritable bridge between earth and heaven. And there he began the greatest adventure of humanity—man in quest of his God.

Asia has given to the world these Resplendent Explorers into the Uncharted Realms of the Spirit. They traveled with no compass save the infallible guide of their hearts and no vessel save the vessel of their faith. They encountered elements more dread than wind or seas—the derision, the hostility, the persecution of their fellowmen. But never a gale so furious that it could turn them from their exultant course! As for their discoveries—only he who follows their charts to the very end, with utter consecration to their spirit, may tell us whether the Goals are the right ones.

A poet not long ago wrote that East and West would never meet save at God's judgment seat. But if we are to believe these Greatest Poets of them all, God's judgment seats are legion—they lie within the heart of Everyman.

So said a Man of Asia, Jesus of Galilee. And so said these other Men of Asia. For all of Them, the Golden Lotus—that thousand-petaled bloom of illumination—is to be found within the heart, and when it blossoms, East, West, North and South fade and one sees only the visage of Humanity. It is this visage of Humanity, seeking for Light, which impelled this Compassionate Host into the regions of the Unknown. For they knew that, despite his perversities, man's inner cry was one: as the Vedas have expressed it, "From the unreal lead me to the Real; from darkness lead me to Light; from death lead me to Immortality."

In studying the treasury of these Philosophies of Asia, men have most often sought to point out their differences. But perhaps the most amazing, most awesome and most compelling thing is their likenesses. If miracles exist—does one not lie in this, that men so far removed, at times simultaneously, should pronounce the same doctrine of Truth and the same path of human liberation? Apparently all men—whatever their race or creed—may pluck the same flowers in the Plain of High Heaven.

Among these unities, perhaps two stand out with especial significance, since they belie the accusations of pessimism which have been thrust against the Oriental Philosophies: One is the responsibility they place upon man himself as the master of his destiny. A god in his own right, man is the arbiter of his fate; by his own will he becomes a king or beggar of spirit. He may wing his way to the Highest or condemn himself a prisoner. While primitive religions make man a puppet of destiny, in the words of

these Sages of the East, he may become the conscious co-worker of God.

And finally, this Processional of Sages of India, China, Japan, Iran and Islam stand united in their hope of the Future. Even in their hours of persecution, they could still envisage Those who were yet to come after them, to lead men into a New Dawn. And is it not on this very note that East and West stand united? For, whether we use the terms of the West: a new Renaissance, a New Era or the Good Life; or the Great Names of the East: Maitreya, Saoshyant, Shambhala—the prayer behind them is One, that men may yet reach that Brotherhood, for which all Teachers of East and West have willingly consecrated their lives.





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# ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY

THE STORY OF THE TEACHERS OF THE EAST



# INDIA

THE VEDIC WORLD

THE GREAT HERESIES

JAINISM

BUDDHISM

HINDUISM



# I

## INDIA

**A**LONG the entire expanse of India—that ancient land of Aryavartha—the pilgrims still pursue their solitary ways over trails rich with ten millenniums of memory. Perhaps it is a Sadhu walking the mountain fastnesses of the Punjab, pronouncing his devotions to the great Rishis, the ancient Seers, inscribers of the Vedas . . . perhaps a Lama seated upon one of the Mendangs of Sikkim, turning his prayer wheel . . . a Sanyassin on the banks of the Ganges or the Jumna, lighting a taper over the sacred waters, in benediction to a soul now gone . . . or a yellow-robed Bhiku deep in meditation before the Great Stupa at Sarnath, contemplating the scene of Gautama's first Sermon on the Wheel of the Law. These, and others, express the variation of that one theme constantly present in India's life: the challenge to the Invisible.

Each devotee of India—and, in his own way, each Indian is a devotee—attests to a chapter in the centuries of religious reverberation which fill the history of India. Framed by the mighty buttresses of the Himavat, which Asia regards as the witnesses to the eternal and celestial summits of a divine force, India's religious life may be likened to an ocean—the waves on its surface change, but eventually all merge into the depthless waters beneath, like an irresistible undercurrent into which all things re-

cede and whence all are born. In studying the religions of this most ancient land, one seems to catch the fragrance as of an age-old forest, for during perhaps a hundred centuries, harvest upon harvest of religion after religion flowered and died, fertilizing its soil until creeds took quick and deep root in its black and foamy loam.

Even above the influences which modern civilization has effected in India, one senses the searches for Truth which have fretted the generations, back over 10,000 years to those first Aryans, who, impelled by the mysterious urge of body and spirit that moves whole peoples, pushed their way south through the Passes of the Hindu-Kush. For suddenly these newcomers appeared upon the land of the dark Dravidians, who, helpless before this irresistible onrush, receded eventually down into the Deccan.

"India has no twilight, but the Eastern Sky flushes suddenly," says Barnett in describing these ancient Aryans of the Vedas. But this is only a manner of speaking—for India has, indeed, her morning twilight, a dark misty hour when crepuscular figures and peoples seem to glide across the Asiatic stage. Before the Aryans had flowed over India like a tidal wave, the Dravidians peopled all her surface, dwelling along the Punjab, the Ganges, and even mingling in the North with the Mongols, the Nepalese, the Tibetans. In these pre-Aryan peoples one also feels a groping of the mediaeval spirit for an explanation of the Eternal Mysteries—and in some ancient tomb, upon a slab, on some carvings upon a rock, or in a remnant of the Bon-Po, we find unexpected revelations of the prob-



lems of the Unknown which called out to these peoples of Asia.

However, approximately four millenniums before Christ, when the curtain rises in India, revealing to us the Aryans settled in well-organized life, the stage of India's religious drama is already set and the performance is already being enacted before us. Already India has evolved an entire Pantheon although we can surmise that long ages passed in the preparation of the spectacle, and many generations of worshippers must have lived and died in inner cogitation, to conceive so full and elaborate a pageant of the Gods.

For the purposes of our study of India's religious life—despite the lure and fascination of these dark pre-Aryan days of magic and animal worship—we must begin with the inscriptions of the Vedas, those first written Scriptures known to man, and giving the first glimpse of the Aryan progenitors of Europe, of Persia, of India. These Vedas were set down by the ancient Seers of India—the Rishis, whose anonymous labors recorded the revelations which were given to them. But the Vedas have never been regarded by India as composed books or even as prophetic articulations—they are regarded as a fund of Divine Wisdom, ever-existing, which is sometimes made manifest but which is omnipresent and inexhaustible. The Rishis were those who discovered these Laws—men whose tremendous spiritual urge made them suddenly aware of these Eternal Verities. Neither birth nor sex determined Rishihood, and as one of the great Rishis, Vatsayana says, "He who has attained through proper means the direct

realization of Dharma (the Law) he alone can be a Rishi, even if he be a *mlecha* (outsider) by birth." Thus, the Vedas to the Indian are a Divine Efflation, made manifest by these ancient Wisemen through whom the Godhead spoke.

Since the date of the setting down of the Vedas which covered a period from the fifth to the third millennium before Christ, India has passed through cycles of faith; for our study of this moving circle of her spiritual life, we may mark three great milestones which we will follow:

First—the Vedic Period beginning with the four ancient Vedas, and evolving into the age of the Interpreters or the Brahmanas and attaining their epitome in the Upanishads, with their evolved cosmogonic and metaphysical contemplations. To the Four Vedas and the Brahmanas is given the name Karma-Kanda, as the religion of action, or ceremonials. To the Upanishads, that of Jnana-Kanda, the religion of knowledge.

Second—the Age of the Great Heresies—as they were styled by the Fundamentalists of their day—Jainism and Buddhism. The Sixth Century Before Christ, that amazing Mystic Century, expressed its urge no less in India, than China, Greece and Persia—and in India produced Niggantha and Siddartha, founders of the two Great Heresies which pronounced their challenge to India's religious life.

Third—Hinduism, which comprised India's return to the contemplation of the Vedas and their expansion in new

variations which embrace the various forms of Hinduism of today.

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### THE VEDIC AGE OF INDIA

How old the Vedas are, no one exactly knows—in the course of their recounting from father to son, and their subsequent recording, perhaps ten millenniums passed. The word Vedas, meaning knowledge, is ascribed to the entire compilation of the Vedic utterance by those Rishis whose wisdom is enhanced by the grandeur of anonymity which in great part aureoles them.

The Vedas were originally fourfold, the best known and most imposing being the Rig-Veda, and the others being the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. One turns first to the Rig-Veda as India's major early contribution, with its 1017 Hymns addressed to the Pantheon of gods, by the first Aryans.

This compilation of ten books, or Mandalas, amazes one by the intricacy of the celestial pageant which has already been conceived even thus early in man's history. Here is to be found a polytheistic spectacle in which the entire processional of Nature and the Universe has been synthesized into an anthropomorphic saga. No one can doubt that the vastness of the Rig-Vedas required the contemplation of numerous generations to conceive these beliefs, these visions, told and retold, born and reborn. As with the myths of Greece and the Saga of the Varen-gians, so in India many centuries earlier, it was the irresistible spectacle of Nature, never ceasing through days,

months, years and cycles, which smote the imaginations of these ancient men. They worshipped above all, Nature's orderliness and its apparent inevitability. And they therefore felt compelled to set up this Anthropomorphic Host, which could symbolize the mysteries and be propitiated by sacrifice, humility, contrition.

The 1017 verses of the Rig-Vedas are a series of Apostrophic Hymns addressed to special Images in the celestial conclave. There seems to be no precise hierarchic sequence discernible in the Indian pantheon, as there is in the Northern Walhalla or in the Greek Parnassus. No single God-head emerges as the apex of this Legion of Divine Aspects. Instead, with the Vedas, all of the god-aspects in turn become reflections of the Supreme Intelligence or Power—and if, in this varying host, Indra, Agni, Varuna or Mitra, seem most often to have captured the greatest number of devotees, it is not by reason of supremacy over the other gods, but because of supernal attributes which made them more intimate paternal guardians of man. This Unity in diversity of the God-head is expressed in the Vedas itself, in the verse: "Whom they call Indra, Mitra, Varuna—that which exists is One: men call It by different names."

Certain cosmogonic ideas emerge through the rhapsodic hymns of the Rig-Veda. One sees that behind all their conceptions there is reiterated the knowledge of a definite Law and Order of the Universe, which is responsible for the incessant ritual of Cause and Effect. In our consideration of the later Hinduism, we will have further opportunity to dwell more definitely on these fundamen-

tal bases of India's religious concepts. But from the beginning, the Vedas all point to a belief in a single monistic principle of the One behind all the Universe, an Energy so Awesome as to be Nameless, but Which begot all manifested things and Which preceded and manifested even the gods. "*Neti, neti*" says the Hindu in speaking of this Unnameable Force—"Not that, not that." And, as the Greeks addressed themselves to the Unknown God, and the Hebrews set, above all Mysteries, the Unmentionable Word—so the Hindus turn to the One Unmanifest behind all manifestations, for these they regard as but the efflatus of His Nameless Being.

Thus in the Creation Hymn is pronounced this Unmanifest, which could not be encompassed in words:

"Then was not either non-existent, nor existent; there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it;  
What covered it, and where and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water,  
Death was not then nor was there aught immortal; no sign was there, no days and nights divided—  
That *One Thing*, breathless, breathed by its own nature, apart from it was nothing whatsoever."

For the ancient Aryans understood that the finite mind could comprehend the Infinite only by becoming one with it. And thus, only the elimination of all known concepts could give a glimpse into the Unconceived.

But also behind the order which Vedic man perceived in physical nature, he set a deific guardian—who is called Rita, and who synthesizes in the Rig-Vedas the ruling force behind the inevitable pattern of the universe. The

Vedas in their pantheon also contemplated a dualism of the foundations; Heaven and Earth assume the masculine and feminine patterns, the eternal complements. Thus, Dyaus-pitar is the Sky-father and Prithi-matar, the Earth-mother and their issue is the physical manifestations of this world of nature.

Of the various images of the God-head, to which the Vedas dedicate their devotion, greatest precedence rests perhaps in Indra, to whom no less than one-fourth of the thousand hymns are addressed and who shares honors with other gods in as many more. Indra is the most powerful of the many forms of the God-head, a magnificent and herculean commander of the stupendous machinery of nature. In the hymns, Indra is the protagonist of colossal heroic exploits that liberate man from the insidious forces of evil, which are constantly opposing the ascendancy of man. Thus, Indra is the great Releaser of humanity.

Of him it is said, "Now I will tell the heroic deeds of Indra, which with his thunderbolt he has wrought aforetime. He slew the serpent and boring for the waters, he split asunder the bellies of the mountains. . . . The God who as soon as born was first endowed with spirit, who with his power protected the gods, at whose might, at the greatness of whose virility, the two worlds were terrified—he, oh men, is Indra."

Second to Indra is Agni, to whom more than 200 hymns are dedicated. He is Agni (Ignis) the First Aspect of the Divine force, who appears in multiple forms—from the hearth fire to the terrestrial and cosmic glories of the uni-

verse. The symbol of Agni as fire, represents the purging force, the purifier—and Agni is the confessor of the Gods themselves. He is a friend and deliverer of humanity, and before his consuming force, evil is annihilated and light is born. Agni is the mysterious element, the cosmic flux.

The very first verse of the Rig-Veda is a Salutation to the Great Agni:

“I magnify Agni the Purohita, the divine ministrant of the sacrifice,  
the Hotri priest, the greatest bestower of Treasures.

Agni, worthy to be magnified by the ancient Rishis and by the present ones, may he conduct the Gods hither.

May one obtain through Agni, wealth and welfare day by day, which may bring glory and high bliss and valiant offspring,

Agni, whatever sacrifice and worship thou encompassest on every side, that indeed goes to the Gods.

May Agni the thoughtful Hotri, he who is true and most splendidly renowned, may the God come hither with the gods.

Whatever good thou wilt do to thy worshipper, O Agni, that work verily is thine, O Angiras,

Thou, O Agni, we approach day by day, O God who shinest in the darkness; with our prayer bringing adoration to thee,

Who art the king of all worship, the guardian of Rita, the shining one, increasing in thy own house,

Thus, O Agni, be easy of access to us, as a Father to his son. Stay with us for our happiness.”

To Fire, the all-purging, the all-redeeming—as to the morning sun—was the first written address of all humanity made.

Varuna is the third of this trinity—he stands as a counterpart of Indra, a reflection of the Moral Laws of the Universe. Varuna, the Guardian behind the Moral order,

is a more kindly but no less inescapable Javeh, who oversees men and metes out the necessary retribution. Soma is another deific apparition—a personification of Soma, the celestial drink, which like the Amritha of the Greeks is the libation of the gods, and an ever-efficacious heavenly draught. Soma is the embodiment of the very power of Indra, and after imbibing it, all gods become irresistible. The god Soma is therefore a synthesis of the Force of Libation. Obviously, *Soma* to the Vedic intelligence was the spiritual draught, which once comprehended rendered man immortal, impervious to the transitory fears and assaults of evil. This is evident in such an invocation to Soma, as the following:

“We have drunk the soma, we have become immortal, we have come to the light, we have found the gods; what can enmity do to us now, and what the malice of mortal, O Immortal?” Obviously this is a nectar, not of man’s making.

An entire host of lesser gods, and an occasional goddess, such as Ushas, the dawn maidens, or Sarasvati, are also discovered in the Vedic anthems—the Pantheon is too numerous to enumerate, but all gods in turn take their places in a processional, distinctly friendly to man. Because the Celestial Forces of the Vedas are not difficult of propitiation and stand ready to aid humanity in the eternal conflict against the Rakshasas, the Picacas and other scourging and insidious demoniac entities of Darkness, which eternally threaten man’s well-being.

In addition to the Rig Vedas—there are the three other Vedas, which form a loosely-supporting text, and supply



the ritualistic aspect of the belief, later developed in highly intricate style in the Brahmanas. The Yajur-Veda gives prose formulas pronounced by the officiating priest at the sacrificial services; this priest, called the Adhvaryu, had the duty of attending to the sacrificial fire and preparing the utensils. Other officiating priests were the Hotar who recited the hymns found in the Rig-Vedas; and during certain parts of the ceremony the Udgatar, the singing priests, accompanied them with the songs found in the Sama-Veda. The Atharva-Veda—banished to a less important position—contained treatises on magic and constituted the magic formulae.

During a later age the Brahmanas developed and presented most elaborate treatises on the rituals which were carried out to the greatest intricacies. In these the Brahmanas, or priestly caste, was set down as the high authority of the three Vedas; they were the masters of ceremonies—and thus as the final arbiters of these intricate rites, the Brahmanas gained the supremacy accorded to them in the development of the castes in India. The Vedic ritual is almost completely concerned with sacrifices of expiation and propitiation—the sacrificial offering varying from food and animals to the soma sacrifice, all tending to win the favor of these celestial forces for man in his problems of earthly life.

Still later—and in many respects the great attainment of the Vedic system—came the Upanishads, revelations of the hermits and the ascetics of India, and the foundations of India's metaphysical concepts. Constituting about 150 to 200 books, the Upanishads may be ascribed to the pe-

riod about the Sixth Century before Christ and represent one of the greatest philosophic systems of Asia. Being the secret teachings, the esoteric Mysteries of the Hindu scriptures, they set down the doctrines which constitute the essence of Hindu religious teachings—and in our study of later Hinduism and Vedantism, we will turn more at length to these beliefs of India's philosophic life. These Upanishads are most often a form of prose dialogue between the chela and his Guru, the pupil and his teacher. The link between pupil and Guru, so revered in all Eastern and Greek systems of philosophy, also constitutes the highest relationship in the Indian teachings. These dialogues of instruction cover diverse speculations upon the most profound metaphysical questions, such as the nature of reality, of illusion (*maya*); the emergence of the many *from* the One—and the re-evolverment of man from many *to* the One.

In our present consideration of the Upanishads we may think of three basic doctrines which are its great pillars; one is an idealistic Monism—the belief in a Single Reality and Principle of which each man is an inseparable part and to which he must inevitably return. The second, is the concept of Reincarnation, the belief in the transmigration of the spirit, birth after birth, life and life, until it attains that state of Divine identity and purification, from which no return to earthly existence is needed. With this principle is inalienably linked the third great doctrine of the Upanishads—the principle of Karma, the irresistible, infallible law of Cause and Effect, of which man is his own inexorable arbiter.

Turning to the first great concept, that of the monistic belief, the Upanishads pronounce the ideal of a Great Principle which always existed and preceded all manifested life. This principle is called Brahman and like the same concept in Genesis, it is the Beginning, the Word, the inconceivable *That*, self-existent, from Which issued all. Atman is the name by which this Brahmanic Force is known in its relation to man. Atman is the Spirit of the Universe, which, in turn, is identical with the Atman or spirit in man himself. Atman is the True Man, no less Grand, Eternal, than the Atman of the Universe. Thus does the Upanishad define Atman:

"The atman is not this; it is not this. It is unseizable for it cannot be seized. It is indestructible, for it cannot be destroyed. It is unattached, for it does not attach itself. It is unbound, it does not tremble, it is not injured." That supernal force of the Universe exists also in man. *Tat Twam Asi*—"That thou art," pronounces the Upanishads, to the True man, stripped of the temporary shell of his passing existence. Perhaps no philosophic doctrine has ever proclaimed a more awe-inspiring concept of the destiny of man's spirit, which to the Upanishadic mind, attains a majesty no less omnipotent than the spirit of the Cosmos.

Thus say the Upanishads, of the spirit of man:

"This is my spirit within my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than the heavens, greater than all worlds.

"The all-working, all-wishing, all-smelling, all-tasting one, that embraceth the universe, that is silent, untrou-

bled—that is my spirit within my heart; that is Brahman. Thereunto when I go hence shall I attain. Who knoweth this, he in sooth, hath no more doubts.”

To reach this universal Atman, is the true purpose of existence for the Hindu, whose expression of Faith is: “From the unreal lead me to the Real; from darkness lead me to Light; from death lead me to Immortality.” And this credo is the very articulation of every religious system on India’s soil—the avid search of the *jivatman* (the individual spirit) for the *Paramatman* (the universal spirit), this evolution from lesser existence to the Highest Existence.

Again and again in the Upanishads, is repeated for the student the emphasis upon the oneness of all things, and the great illusion of separateness: “What is here is the same there; and what is there is the same here. He who sees any difference here, goes from death to death.”

In this passage is evident also that great principle of reincarnation, which constitutes another of the pillars of the Upanishadic doctrine.

The doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma support this ideal of Monism, so inherent in the beliefs of the Upanishads. Western minds have given a far too guileless interpretation to this principle of reincarnation. The Upanishads do not picture a simple metempsychosis, by which the perplexed spirit is placed somewhat haphazardly in various bodies, be these of man or animal. In accordance with the highly evolved system of reincarnation, reflected in the Upanishads, the individual spirit, having become manifested on earth, must eventually return to its logical

abode, and become one with Itself. The spirit of man, say the Upanishads,—like all universal manifestations—is subject to the law of evolution, and in its adventure back to the Universal Spirit, it too must evolve through the experiences and the impacts gained during its temporary dwellings on earth. Thus, life after life, with death but the intervening interlude, the spirit purges away the temporary, the things of the senses and the mind, thus reaping lesson after lesson, through the scourging experiences of centuries of living. And what determines the life into which a man's spirit shall be incarnated?—None other than Karma, the great law of Cause and Effect. For man has himself determined the cause and circumstances of his rebirth, in an earlier life.

Hence the great determinant of the incarnation to come is the *desire* of the individual himself; that to which a man has attached himself, that he becomes; the progeny which a man has created through thought, through word and deed, he shall inevitably meet—in one life or in a thousand lives, but *inevitably*. Hence, did the Upanishadic teachers emphasize to their pupils the practicability of disciplining their desires, and of purging themselves of all but that true Self: “He who forms desires in his mind is born again through desires here and there. But to him whose desires are fulfilled and who is conscious of the true Self, all desires vanish even here on earth. And here they say that a person consists of desires. And, as is his desire, so is his will. And as his will, so is his deed. And whatever deed he does, that he will reap.”

Among the most beautiful passages of the Upani-

shads is that which tells of the great round of births, self-created: "And as a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass, and after having made another approach to another blade, draws itself together towards it, thus does the Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance and after making another approach, draws himself together to it.

"And as the goldsmith taking a piece of gold turns it into another, newer and more beautiful in shape, so does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, make unto himself another, newer and more beautiful shape whether it be like the Father, or like the Gandharvas, or like the Deva's, or like Pagapati, or like Brahman or like other beings."

This passage in itself will contradict those Westerners who speak of the Vedic doctrines as pessimistic, and of the inevitability of Karma as terrifying. That Inner Self, which is the true man, according to the Upanishads, is man's best ally. Its aspiration is ever upwards, seeking the return to Brahman. The message of the Upanishads is a message of redemption to man, but one which places the responsibility of this redemption completely upon the man himself—it places before man, one of the most supreme objectives ever expressed for the human spirit—identity with the Lord, and it allows man himself to choose if he shall be a king or beggar of spirit. This solemn discipline is hallowed in the Upanishads by the conviction that the God force is eternally about us, that each moment may be a sacrament to the divine, that the flow of Brahman envelops us and resides within our hearts.

The Upanishads in themselves are the way of that discipline. And for Hindus the outer words of the Upanishads bespeak a guide to inner mystic experiences which come through the discipline of the spirit by a teacher. For such Teachings each Hindu turns to his master or Guru, for the Upanishads in themselves mean "Sitting with the master"—thus implying that the deepest inner implications of this Teaching must come only by word of mouth, along that line of the Hierarchic chain which is so interwoven in the entire philosophic concept of the East.

But, having purged himself of desire, and attached himself to the One—man reaches the Supreme: "Having taken the Upanishads as the bow, as the great weapon, let him place on it the arrow, sharpened by devotion. Then, having drawn it with a thought directed to *That Which is*, hit the mark, O friend! *Om* is the bow, the Self is the arrow; Brahman is called its aim, That which is the Indestructible. In him, the heaven and the earth and the sky are woven, the mind also with all senses. It is to be hit by a man who is not thoughtless; and then, as the arrow becomes one with the Target, he will become one with Brahman."

That which Taoism called the great Returning Home—the Upanishads saw as the arrow becoming one with the Target, man and the Divine become one.

## THE GREAT HERESIES

## JAINISM

In the history of philosophies in India, the Sixth Century Before Christ was enveloped in that aureole of Mysteries, which was apparent in all countries. Never perhaps has a period of history seemed so greatly to reflect a Divine Breath brooding over the world. It was as though, in the spheres of thought and spirit, the cycles had brought on a new springtime—as though the Ear of the Father had been laid over the surface of the Earth. And everywhere new tides of spiritual questing sprang into being. Suddenly men felt the melody of a celestial urge within them, which expressed itself everywhere in the quickening of religious thought and in the investments of great humans with the mantle of Light. The impress of this epoch manifested itself in new spiritual articulations—in China, with Confucius and Lao Tze; in Greece, the Pythagorean philosophers initiated a noble line of the challengers of the Invisible; in Iran, this spirit became articulate through Zoroaster; in Judaea, it inspired the forceful utterances of those leonine prophets of Israel. And in India, that land which quivers like its own *Vina* to all religious thought, it breathed life into the creation of the Upanishads, into the seemingly sudden uprising of numerous new cults, new forms of beliefs, which assailed many of the forms of the past and thus gained for themselves from the established religion, the title of the “Heresies.” Of these “Heresies” there were no less than



three score and ten, each expressing its version of the divine law—but above all, two of them threatened the supremacy of the Brahmanists who in the manner of all established churches assailed them as pronouncements against the great Vedic law.

These two great Heresies were Jainism and Buddhism—both doctrines springing up around two individual founders and contemporaries. The destinies of these two non-conformist faiths were strangely anomalous. The former, born in India and uniquely Indian in its expression, remained forever within the fold of her borders. Unlike the scores of others which sprang up only to evaporate with time, Jainism maintained its tenacious hold upon its followers up to the present, when its million and a half adherents keep alive with an ardent intensity, the zealous doctrine of Niggantha. No philosophy of India seems to be so reflective of the color of India; it is an inborn doctrine, which is peculiarly indigenous to that soil and has apparently been unable to take root elsewhere. Quite another destiny awaited the second of the great “Heresies”—Buddhism. Thriving quickly and bounteously around the luminous figure of its founder, Gautama, it made valiant headway in the land of its beginning, only gradually to wither away there and make room for the re-awakening of the Hindu doctrines. It was reduced to only a fringe of its former force in India—but beyond the boundaries of Aryavārtha the word of the Buddha spread like the desert wind, until it had touched all corners of the Asiatic world. For Buddha was the Light of all Asia,

and no country of Asia has remained untouched by the benign word of the great Siddartha.

In a manner, Jainism was not the unrestrained heresy which it was styled—it took its stand midway between Brahmanism and Buddhism. It turned back with unconcealed zeal to the principle of ascetic discipline so inherent in the spirit of India, and committed itself with almost agonizing fortitude to the ideal of non-injury to man or beast.

Like all religious faiths of India, Jainism is believed by its followers to be ever-existent, a truth immemorial and without beginning; and they believe that the founders of the faith but drew aside the curtain through revelation. This revelation, they owe to a chain of twenty-four conquerors or Jinas, Tithakaras, who were successively destined to pass down this illumined doctrine to their followers. The first twenty-two of these fathers of the faith are believed by the Jains to have existed in the hoary yesterdays of time-before-memory. But the last two, to whom they owe the immediate articulation of their great doctrine, are within historic epochs and were probably historic personages. A veil of nebulosity is around the twenty-third Jina—Parantha who lived about 817 B.C. But Vardhamana Mahavira, who animated the doctrine to new life in the Sixth Century before Christ, restated the terms of its loosely-knit credo for an awaiting circle of followers.

In the story that has come down to us of the life of Vardhamana, who is also called Niggantha, many of the details bear a strange analogy to those in the life of the

Gautama, and one wonders what texture of fantasy the ages have woven. Born a Kshattriya, of the warrior caste, like his great contemporary, Vardhamana is said to have also been the son of a nobleman of Vaisali, in the region of Magadha. Myths not unlike the prenatal tales of the Buddha, tell of miracles which are said to have attended his birth. And his mother, Tricala, is said to have shared the Annunciatory blessings which presage the comings of all the great Teachers. His conception and birth were attended by propitious signs and symbols. Of his youth, we know little, but we hear of his marriage at an early age to Lady Yacoda, a noblewoman, who bore him at least one child, a daughter. This daughter later takes her part in the history of Jainism as the wife of Jamali who became the first dissenter, after the death of the founder. In his thirtieth year, Vardhamana, having played his part as a householder, determined to devote himself to the spiritual life and became a monk. Previous lives had crowned him with three degrees of initiation, and already his chain of births was soon to end. Entering into a deep fast, he sat under the Acoka tree and there attained the fourth degree of knowledge, a fitting epitome to his search for the Highest. Achieving this final degree of enlightenment, he began his preaching; like his contemporary, his was a long and fruitful ministry since he was able to proselytize his faith for forty-two years. In these more than two score years he succeeded in gathering about him 14,000 disciples—these being of the four orders permitted to the Jains: the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

Jainism was regarded as a dangerous and atheistic sect

by the fundamentalists of the day, in that it rejected the ideal of a Single Principle to which all men would eventually return; this denial of the ideal Monism of the Upanishads classed the Jains at once as dissenters from the established faith. In the place of Monism, the Jains set up a dualistic system. They granted that the cosmos had its spirit, but also maintained that man had his own independent and immortal spirit which did not merge into the Ultimate Cosmic One, but maintained its immortal life independently. And not only was such spiritual independence the privilege of man, but every plant, animal—in fact every atom of earth, fire, water and even wind, had its own spirit, all eternal. Thus the universe comprised myriads of independent spirits.

Like all Hindu faiths, the end of life to the Jains was non-life—in other words, the highest bliss for the spirit was not to have to be born again. Thus, men must strive to eliminate every vestige of desire, every new entanglement of old earthly debts known as Karma, and the body would no longer be clothed in mortal existence, but would continue its eternal and blissful being in a disincarnate soul-entity. By its very name—Jainism, from the root *Ji*, to conquer—the doctrine sought to call men to the conquest of lust for life. Moksha, or release from life, was the great liberation to the Jains. Until this liberation was consummated, reincarnation was inevitable—and as with other Hindu faiths, reincarnation was based on a man's past desires and deeds, upon the inexorable law of Karma. The Jains, however, have a unique philosophy of Karma, held by no other faith. They hold that Karma is a form

of matter, Karma-matter, which adheres to the spirit, entangles itself to it, so to speak, like a web about a cocoon. Nothing can possibly separate this adhering matter from the spirit and only the austerities and ascetic practices of life after life, will finally dissolve this tenacious Karma-substance and permit the chrysalis of the soul to emerge from its cocoon to its free and Karma-less existence-perpetual. As the Jain scripture tells us, "As heat can unite with iron and water with milk, so karma unites with soul, and the soul so united is called a soul in bondage." One may thus imagine the soul encased in an enslaving cocoon, never to be freed save by its austere consecration to the ascetic life.

Jainism was also not without its own Pantheon—in addition to the twenty-four Jinas who gradually became deified in the minds of the devotees, Jainism added a company of sixty-three great beings and a host of spirits and nature entities of good and evil—an amazingly diverse company of luminous and ominous beings. These however seemed to occupy a kind of symbolic function apart from the actual doctrine of the Jains, which set down for the believer a strict path of salvation, varying in intensity according to which of the four orders you professed. All Jains had certain common responsibilities—first was the complete adherence to the Three Virtues or Gunas, the Three Jewels of Jainism: these were Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. Right faith was a belief in the Jinas; right knowledge the confession of the principles of eventual liberation and of life in all existing things; and right conduct comprised the commitment to

the five vows—namely not to kill, nor lie, nor steal, to practice chastity and to renounce possessions. In the case of the laymen and women the last two vows were followed in less strict form and they were permitted to take the lesser vows as householders. But to the Jain monk, complete renunciation of sexual intercourse and of all possessions was a *sine qua non* of his path.

The vows, to which he was expected to adhere with supreme discipline for twelve years, had their additional responsibilities. In addition to adhering to them strictly, the monk had to practice a continuous attitude of carefulness, of constant restraint; he had to fulfill all the given observances and meditations and also conquer all the troubles designated as attending the life of a monk. The attitude of care was an especially prescribed principle among the Jains. Believing, as they did, that life was manifest in each atom, they held it incumbent upon each devotee never to destroy life. Thus, non-injury was the first virtue prescribed by the credo; with the monk, the haunting fear lest he injure a living thing pervaded each of his actions. Eating flesh was of course inconceivable; but even beyond this, the Jain monks were expected never to annihilate life. When they breathed they wore, before their nose and mouth, a piece of gauze which they always carried, lest they might inhale some innocent living creature. When they walked, they carried a broom and swept the path to right and left before them, lest they might unknowingly tread on some infinitesimal creature. And this doctrine of non-injury became the great common aspira-

tion of all Jains, though they later dissented in interpretations of other beliefs of their scriptures.

The monk was also expected to restrain himself in body, in tongue, in mind, lest he violate the three perfections. The troubles he was expected to conquer are especially revealing—they were twenty-two in number, and among them were the sense of hunger, thirst, cold, heat, the feeling of annoyance at mosquitoes and gnats; the feeling of shame at his nudity; the loss of tranquillity at the sight of a fair woman; the regret at not having a bed, since he was forbidden to sleep on a bed; the sense of offense or dissatisfaction; pain over disease or wounds of his feet, in treading on thorns. One may well understand the perseverance which was demanded from the Jain hermit, to overcome these troubles.

After having practiced rigidly for twelve years these various rules, the monk, if he had conquered them, was accorded the privilege of committing suicide by starvation, an achievement held high in Jain practices, since it predicated intensest asceticism, and promised liberation from future life on earth. Jainism has been elusive in explaining this liberation of the spirit, otherwise than by insisting that it was not a merging into the One, but a perpetuation of the separate spirit in an island-like immortality. The dualistic philosophy of the Jains holds that the entire universe is *Jiva* (conscious) or *ajiva* (unconscious). *Jiva* is the spirit, which of itself has infinite intelligence, peace, faith and power. However it loses these qualities when it is allied to matter, for then it is presumed that it is obscured by its Karmic encumbrances. This *Jiva* within a

man is not always the same size, it seems to diminish or enlarge according to the space which must be filled, "becoming equal in extent to a small or large body, by contraction or expansion." The ajiva or non-conscious part of the universe consists of matter, of all kinds, and even of time and space. Just how Jiva and ajiva are finally merged together—whether they have any principle in common is not explained, so that this dualistic principle remains in somewhat nebulous non-realization. The canon of the Jains also goes into intricate discussion on the various attributes of matter and spirit, but ultimately leaves unsolved the destiny of these two streams, matter and spirit, which never seem to find their way into a common sea.

Jainism remained comparatively united during the life of Vadharmana. But soon dissensions as to some of the doctrines followed, with Jamali, the founder's son-in-law, as the first to cast doubt into the ranks. There were a number of hair-splitting questions which precipitated nine successive schisms, until finally a definite cleft set in on the one basic question of whether the Jains should wear clothes or not. The Svengabaras maintained that white clothes could be worn, but the Digambaras renounced all clothes, calling themselves the sky-robed, and saying that clothing in itself indicated a man's sense of shame or separateness, and was in itself a denial of the great law of renunciation of self. And on this basic difference these two sects have never come together.

Though the Jains are not a numerous group, as devotees go in the ocean of humanity which is India, their influence is a significant one, both in the industrial and crea-



tive life of India. Being excluded from such professions as agriculture, by the very fear of exterminating life even innocently, they have found their outlets in trade, notably money-lending, in which the risk of killing living things was minimized. Thus, they have reaped considerable fortunes and through this wealth, have gained great prestige as a group in their native land.

The world owes them an added gratitude for their outstanding influence on the development of architectural life in India. While Europe was laying its great Gothic creations, the Jains in India were building the magnificent temples and rock shrines in the Caves of Ellora, at Mount Abu, and in other sections of India, where they remain as immemorial monuments of renunciatory labor. For the Jains discovered that years upon years of endless carving and modeling of the great rocks, which have become lace under their tireless hands, were as nothing in comparison to the years of discipline of the recalcitrant enemies, the body and the mind.

We of the West may wonder how a principle which thus flagellates the being into ascetic discipline could find followers even in our modern day. To understand this, one must understand India. Asceticism is a doctrine distinctly akin to her expression—for even into the sacrifices of the Vedas she projected the aureole of asceticism. It was the very spirit of asceticism perhaps which permitted her to hold on to Jainism even after she had turned from Buddhism to go back to the Hinduism which spoke to her of her yesterdays.

Perhaps for this reason the faith of Niggantha con-

tinues and for 800 generations, monks and men tremble when they breathe and walk, lest they assault the great hereafter by unknowingly injuring the infinitesimal manifestations of Jiva.

### BUDDHISM

Among the multiform blooms of that lush Century in India, the most radiant and fragrant flower was Buddhism, one of the most noble pronunciations of the potentiality of the human spirit that the world has known. In the light of the great teaching of Gautama Buddha, man takes on the role of collaborator with the Cosmos, in the endless stream of evolution.

During his long ministry, Gautama constantly stressed the Doctrine not himself, but without doubt Buddhism owes its early victories to the luminous instrument of its transmission. After twenty-six centuries, the Great Gautama stands forth, against the relief of history, as one of the most resplendent personalities of all times. The example of his life; the synthesis of his being; the entire aspect of the man and his achievement, have cast an aureole over the history of Asia. As it would be impossible to conceive the history of the West without the figure of the Christ, so difficult is it to conceive of the past of Asia, without the figure of the Buddha. His majestic presence, his indefatigable quest, impart a new dignity to the possibility of humanity. He is one of the few beings of history whose very presence on earth has raised the entire stand-

ard of human achievement, and marked a noontide in the stream of time.

The word "Buddha," it must be remembered, is not a name but a title, meaning "The Enlightened One." This Title, according to Asia, was bestowed upon those few ineffable human beings, who, over the course of millenniums, had striven flamingly towards the Great Truth, had vanquished all impasses, and finally, in the supreme conquest, had attained identity with the Unutterable and Unencompassable. In other words, their consciousness had become one with the Divine Force. Cycles passed in the preparation of such a Vessel of Enlightenment, who before his final achievement was called a Boddhisatva or Arhat; and the reverberations of his victory over the assaults of all darkness and ignorance, once attained, echoed in worlds beyond worlds. Thus Siddhartha, Prince of Kapilavasthu, gained the crown of Buddha-ship in the era before Christ; by the loftiest of human efforts he attained the title of the Enlightened One, as had the Three Buddhas who preceded him, and as it will be attained, in Asia's concept, by the Boddhisatva Maitreya, the Buddha Who is to be.

Prince Siddhartha, destined to become the Buddha of this cycle, was son and heir of King Suddhodana, reigning head of the tribe of the Sakyas, who occupied a part of the Nepalese Terai. The city of his birth was Kapilavasthu, which had already gained luster by being named in honor of Kapila, one of India's great philosophers and founder of one of its six major philosophic systems, who lived about a century earlier. Suddhodana, father of

Siddartha, was king over the Sakyas by virtue of his priority as Elder of the descendants of Ishvaku, sprung from the solar race of the Kshattriyas. Hence Siddartha was of the Kshattriya, or warrior caste of India.

Around the conception and birth of the Enlightened One centuries have since woven their innumerable traditions, which go back into the aeons when, in the Tusita Heavens, the spiritual hosts bade godspeed to the Boddhisatva as he undertook his final passage through earth. We are told in these traditions, that realizing that the hour of the great Advent had come, the spirit of the coming Buddha made the customary five great observations over the earth—electing the time, the continent and the country of his future birth, as well as his future mother; and in this last he had to consider her allotted span of life, for this has its deep significance in the conception of the Future Buddha. And thus India and the Nepal Terai became the chosen birthplace, and Maha-Maya, consort of the King of the Sakyas, became the elect of all women, the mother of a Saviour.

As with many of the Great Teachers, tradition speaks of an Immaculate Conception, and Buddha is said to have entered the womb of his mother in a dream. She beheld her future son in the form of a white elephant, who touched her side with his tusk. In visions and dreams, Maha-Maya had revelations of the great destiny which awaited her coming son. And just before the time of his birth, yearning to see once again her own kinfolk, she asked the King's permission to return to the land of her father for a visit. As she was borne along on a Palan-

quin, she beheld a lovely grove, exquisite with flowers, and fragrant with the blossoms of the blooming sal-trees. She asked her attendants to let her tarry in the spot for a while; and there in the Lumbini Grove, among its flowers and blossoms, was born her son, named by her, Siddartha, which means, "He who has fulfilled his purpose."

Through the legendary frame in which a revering humanity loves to surround its great beings, one may still perceive the definite historic line of Buddha's life which has been affixed by the landmarks still standing upon the steps of his earthly path.

Natalie Rokotoff, in her beautiful book on the "Foundations of Buddhism," has told us of the glowing anticipation which surrounded his coming: "Visions and prophecies preceded His birth and the event itself, in the full noon-day of May, was attended with all propitious signs in heaven and on earth. Thus, the great Rishi, Asita, dwelling in the Himalayas, having learned from the Devas that a Boddhisatva, the future Buddha, had been born to the world of men in the Lumbini Park, and that He would turn the Wheel of the Doctrine, immediately set out on the journey to pay homage to the future Teacher of men. Reaching the palace of King Suddhodana, he expressed the desire to see this new born Boddhisatva. The king ordered the child to be brought to the Rishi, expecting his blessing. But the Rishi on seeing the child first smiled and then wept. The king anxiously asked the reason for his sorrow and whether he saw an ill-omen for his son. To this, the Rishi replied that he saw nothing harmful for the child. He rejoiced because

the Boddhisatva would achieve full enlightenment and become a great Buddha; and he grieved because his own life was short and he would not live to hear the great doctrine preached."

And thus is the visit of the Magi repeated in the life of each new-born teacher of men.

In accordance with the foretold prophecy, Queen Maha-Maya died when Siddartha was seven days old, for the Buddhist writings tell us that "the womb which has been occupied by a Future Buddha is like the shrine of a temple, and can never be used again. Therefore it was, that the mother of the Future Buddha died when he was seven days old."

To the King, the significant prophecies attending the birth of his son, were strangely troublesome. Siddartha, the prince, was next in line to the throne of the Sakyas—next in the descent from the solar Ishvaku, and by caste a Kshattriya and a warrior. Preferring to interpret the auspicious visions about his son and his luminous destiny, in the light of a great temporal conquest, rather than that of a conqueror of the spirit, the King determined to shut out from Siddartha's knowledge all the conflicts and miseries of men.

Enclosed within the luxuries of palace and gardens, which he was never permitted to leave, Siddartha saw the visage of a world constantly joyous, unfretted by change, and filled with pleasures. Here he dwelt, a virtual prisoner, in the companionship of his wife, the Princess Yasodhara, whom he married at the age of sixteen and who was the mother of his son, Rahula. Seeing him

thus surrounded by his nobles and maidens, among the fountains and the music of an Elysian garden, the King rejoiced, believing he had diverted destiny, and the star of victory which shone above his son would add luster to his sword and his throne.

But within the spirit of the future Buddha, the yearning of millenniums resounded. Despite the untroubled luxury of his days, a pall of unrest, of unbelief, invaded his being. He sought solace in rides through the palace gardens accompanied only by his faithful attendant and charioteer, Channa—And it was during these rides, that the future Buddha had the four sudden, stark encounters that razed the Mirage of Happiness which his father had set about him and in which he had spent his years. Certainly, it was the strategy of destiny that brought across his path, these first aspects of life's misery—for the King had forbidden anyone to enter the gardens, on pain of the severest punishment. The King had ordained that within the royal grounds, there must be no evidence of life's suffering or its ephemeral flow.

Nevertheless, one day as he rode along the customary path, we are told that the Prince Siddhartha suddenly beheld a figure, such as he had never seen before—perhaps a man, but seered, wrinkled, his back bent, and dragging himself feebly along. He arrested his horse and turned to Channa, "What manner of being is this?" he asked. "It is an aged man," answered Channa. "And was he always this way? If not, how has he come to this state of misery?" And Channa replied, "It is the destiny of all men, even you and me, my prince, to pass from youth to

maturity, and finally to old age. No man may escape this fate."

Twice again did such encounter come to the Boddhisatva—the second time, it was a leper who crossed his path; and the third time, a funeral procession passed before him and he perceived with horror among a group of mourners, the lifeless corpse, the untenanted shell of man, who Siddartha had been taught to believe, was created for continuous happiness. All the vague disquiet of his being crystallized into a consuming compassion for men and into the inexorable determination to find the Truth which could save humanity from this eternal frustration and pain. And with this determination, having forever burnt away in his consciousness the illusory kingdom of happiness, his troubled spirit sought the direction of the Truth. And as he awaited, the fourth encounter came. Before him, whether in vision or reality, he beheld the image of a hermit—a mendicant in a yellow robe, whose benign presence he construed as the command to leave all and venture into the world to conquer the truth which might save all men. Thus commanded and inspired, and having reached that twenty-ninth year, regarded as the great spiritual threshold, the future Tathagata—the perfect enlightened one—set forth on his quest. Waiting until midnight, when all the palace slept, he passed sorrowfully, but with complete determination through all its corrodored splendor, bidding a silent farewell to his wife and son and all those he loved. In the courtyard he aroused Channa and bade him saddle his horse. Accompanied by Channa he rode swiftly through the widely-



opened gates which he would never enter again as prince. Behind him the languorous gardens of man-made happiness—before him those temptations so exquisite to all Saviours—martyrdom, poverty, derision, sacrifice, on the way to the eternal Truth. And thus, a freed spirit, he sped towards the banks of the River Anoma. There, he cut off his hair with his sword and removing his jewels he gave them with his sword to Channa to take back to the Palace, bidding him return to Kapilavasthu and apprise his father of his purpose. Siddartha seated himself beside the water's edge and remained there for seven days, meditating upon the direction he would take. During his stay he had besought a passing beggar to exchange clothes with him. Thus, in a beggar's garments the prince set out in quest of illumination. And he was seven years upon his way. Destiny which might well spare a king but not a Buddha had thus contrived to fulfill the age-old prophecies, which presaged the aeon-awaited enlightenment of Gautama.

First Siddartha determined to go to Rajagriha, in the kingdom of Magadha. There, in the forests, dwelt two hermits, Alara Kalama and Uddaka, Brahmans, who were widely renowned for their religious practices. Through the strict observance of all prescribed prayers and rituals, they hoped to penetrate truth by divine dispensation. Siddartha listened to their councils and becoming their pupil sought to fulfill these practices punctiliously. But his spirit soon disclosed to him that the path to truth was not through outer rituals and practices, that truth could

not be won by dispensation, but by an inner realization. He then determined to seek further.

Leaving the Brahmans to their assiduous rituals, Siddhartha next went to Uruvela where he decided personally to test the road of self-mortification as a pathway to truth. He gave himself utterly to the practice of the most severe penances and deprivations, in utter solitude. But soon word of his almost superhuman ascetic devotion spread and he was joined by five ascetics, who, hearing of his renunciation, followed him as their example of the highest consecration and sacrifice. For six years, Siddhartha continued his tests of self-mortification in the most extreme manner—he was already on the verge of death from his privations, when he realized that this asceticism even to death had brought him actually no nearer to the truth, nor the conquest of earthly life. He had tested the path of extreme asceticism and found it useless. Despite the recriminations of the five fellow-ascetics who regarded his act as apostasy, he forsook his asceticism and set forth once more in his search for the Ultimate. Seven years had gone by, and the one ideal—the Attainment of Truth—still seemed far remote. He had learned that neither ritual nor asceticism alone would bring him to that road to peace—the consummation which he sought. But the path of discovery still lay before him.

Wandering thus, on the night of the full moon of May, he reached the neighborhood of Gaya, and seated himself at the foot of a great tree in the posture of meditation. As one of the Buddhist Sutras tells us, "The Future Buddha turned his back to the trunk of the Bo-tree and



BUDDHA, THE CONQUEROR  
From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich



faced the East. And making the mighty resolution: 'Let my skin and sinews and bones become dry, and welcome! And let all the flesh and blood in my body dry up! But never will I stir from this seat until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom.' He sat himself down cross-legged, in an unconquerable position from which not even the descent of a hundred thunderbolts at once could have dislodged him." And thus, through the night, through the meditations of his spirit, Buddha rent away veil after veil from the face of Truth. And finally, with dawn he beheld that Undivested Truth, which transfigured him, and gained him the crown of Buddhahood. The annals of all Faiths have had their counterpart of this great moment of the elected Illuminate, when the spirit in awesome solitude searches fearlessly the depths of Cosmos. Thus also, unattended, face to face with the Supreme Mystery, Christ passed his supreme trial upon the Mountain.

And it is said, that as Buddha sent out his challenge to space, never to rise until he had come face to face with Truth, Mara the prince of darkness, uttered a cry of rage, and assembled the entire army of his vassals about him until it extended twelve leagues around in all directions. And that host of united evil swept down like a flood, determined to overwhelm the Great Searcher: The entire demoniac force against the One Being who carried the burden of the world!

In this lone battle of that night, which comprised in itself the destiny of cycles, was enacted the life drama of all humanity. For, to the ultimate truth, all men must

come by way of that supremely heroic victory of the spirit; neither asceticism nor ritual can take the fortress of the Unknown. It may be stormed only by the flaming sword of the undaunted spirit. Thus, Michael, slaying the dragon, is an eternal symbol of the way of the Redeemer.

Hence, on that memorable night of May, with the full Wasak moon of Aryavārtha looking down upon the immovable figure seated beneath the giant tree, the inner strata of eternity were rent by legion after legion of the army of evil, hurling their arrows of temptation against the Vessel of immortality. Ambition, desire, discontent, the love of kin, death—all flung their enticements before him; but his pure spirit, so near perfection, turned back assault after assault—for naught could penetrate the impregnable shield of his decision. And so, vanquishing the legions of temptation, his irresistible spirit won stronghold after stronghold of the Great Truth. The entire universe thundered with the fury of Mara, as hour upon hour, the pure spirit of the Tathagata traveled the spiral path to the Infallible Knowledge of the One. And in that dark silence of the hour before dawn, as in that future Gethsemane, Mara withdrew in frustration and defeat. And when the dawn arose, the Boddhisatva had become the Buddha; the cup of illumination was His. A new Saviour had been vouchsafed to mankind.

For twenty-eight days, the Buddha remained at Gaya, deliberating upon the truths that had come to him. And once again as he determined his course of future action, Mara came to him: "Thou hast attained the supreme Truth; Thou art entitled to pass from earthly ex-

istence to the eternal place of the illumined. Men will not accept the truth—seek, therefore, that higher existence which you have earned.”

And with Christ, the Buddha replied: “Get thee behind me, Satan.” And, become one of the Great Compassionate Host, Buddha set out to give others the word of deliverance: “Let him who has ears to hear, hearken and believe.”—and he turned his steps towards an awaiting world. Remembering first the five companions of his ascetic quest from the woods of Uruvela, Buddha determined to find them and point out to them the truth—and it was in the Deer Park in Sarnath, beyond the present Benares, that he once more accosted them. Time had not stilled their resentment, that he had rejected the path of asceticism. But as he approached them, they perceived a man transfigured, the aura of the Buddha was about him and his person radiated with the Light of One who had been face to face with Immortality. Overcome, they rendered homage to him, whom they had intended to revile. And seated before them, Buddha pronounced his first sermon—known as the great Sermon of the Wheel of the Law, which constitutes the synthesis of that Truth which he had gained in his vigil under the Bo Tree.

The great future exponent of Buddhism, Asvagosha, in his book, the *Buddha-karita*, describes that signal moment when Buddha pronounced his first word of the Doctrine of the Truth:

“Listen, O mendicants, there are two extremes—one which is devoted to the joys of desire, vulgar. And the other, which is tormented by the excessive pursuit of self-

inflicted pain in the mortification of the soul's corruption—these two extremes are each devoted to that which is unworthy and useless. They have nothing to do with true asceticism, renunciation of the world or self-control, or with true indifference of pain, or with the means of attaining deliverance. Let him who realizes the uselessness of inflicting pain on the body and who has lost interest in the pleasure and pain of a visible nature, follow the Middle path for the good of the world.

"The Tathagata proclaims the good Law which consists of the four noble truths and the Eightfold Path which is the means to attaining perfect knowledge. . . .

"Having thus commenced the noble truths, I will describe the true self-control; this noble truth is the best of all holy laws. Walk as long as existence lasts, holding fast to the noble eightfold Path—this noble truth is the highest path for the attainment of true liberation. Through their merits virtuous men, who understand noble knowledge go to heavenly worlds, from their self-restraint in body, speech and thought. But all those who are devoted to existence, are tormented with the swarms of its evils and being consumed by old age, disease and death, each one dies to be born again.

"Many wise men discourse on the laws of coming back, but there is no one who knows how the cessation of being is produced. The body, composed of five skandhas and produced from the five elements, is empty and without soul, and arises from the action of the chain of causation. This chain of causation is the cause of existence and its cessation. He who, knowing this, desires to promote the



good of the world, must hold fast to the chain of causation and affix his mind upon wisdom. He must embrace the vow of self-denial, and practice the four perfections, going through existence doing always good to all beings. Then having become an arhat and conquering all the wicked he shall enter Nima."

Thus, in his first sermon, the Buddha pronounced the great doctrine of the Turning of the Wheel of the Law, the Chakra or Chariot Wheel, and in his first pronouncement to the five ascetics he summarized the entire import of his Teaching as it had flowed in to him in his vigil of meditation.

Herein was pronounced the great doctrine of the Middle Path—that which eschewed the life of earthly pleasure as degrading and vulgar, but found the path of excessive asceticism and self-mortification as equally vain and useless. In the Middle Path, or the way of discrimination, which demanded self-control and discipline, the Buddha perceived the possibility of enlightenment—and he outlines this by that Eightfold Path, which is postulated upon the Four Noble Truths of Buddha. These four truths pronounced by the Blessed One were as follows: First, *Existence is sorrow*. In all acts of life, the Blessed One saw that suffering was inevitable. Birth, growth, decay, death, illness all were of themselves filled with the full chalice of pain. Separation from one's beloved ones; hatred against one's oppressors; craving for the unobtainable—all these and other phantoms of existence which grew up from the sense of separateness of the human spirit, were inevitable in the course of every human life.

Second, *Sorrow is caused by desire*. Buddha pronounced that the contact with the outside world stirred the senses of craving for certain enjoyment, or to a delight in the things of earth. These desires bound man to earth. In this earth-bound desire is sorrow rooted.

Third, *To conquer sorrow a man must annihilate the thirst of desire and the attachment of life*. Only one way, for Buddha, could liberate man from the chains of earth—the effacement of desire.

Fourth, *To attain this cessation he must follow the Eightfold Path*.

This Eightfold Path, which led to the liberation of the man, included: Right belief; right aims; right speech; right actions; right pursuit of life; right endeavor; right mindfulness and right meditation. Through this discipline, unswervingly pursued, could the man eventually find Truth and his way to the Nirvana, which was the true end of the innumerable lives which constituted the One Life.

For through this pathway, man could seize and comprehend the chain of causes, the eight-linked fetter which bound him to earth—these eight links were forged on the following promises: Existence is suffering; suffering is caused by being born; one is born because one belongs to the world of the living; one lives because one nourishes existence within one; one nourishes existence because of desire; one desires because of sensation; one has sensation through contacting the outer world; these contacts are caused by the action of the senses; the senses are there because one opposes one's personal self to the impersonal; one is personal because his consciousness is imbued with

the sense of his own personality; this consciousness is the result of former existences; these existences obscure the consciousness because of ignorance. Thus, for Buddha, the final cause of earthly life and its sorrow as well as the reason for the spirit's unnecessary return to the suffering which is life, was based on the most heinous of all offenses—that of *ignorance*. Ignorance was the greatest of all sins. Thus for man, the path of emancipation was first through self-enlightenment, a way open to all men. This way was neither by rituals nor denial, but through the discipline which unlocked the inner spirit of the harmonics of life.

Buddhist tradition asserts that as the Enlightened One that day in Sarnath pronounced this great summary of the truth which had come to him, space was filled with the angelic hosts, who bore witness to the Doctrine of man's mastery over his own fate. To the five ascetics, his words came as a flood of truth and they turned to his doctrine. And other men, hearing of the new word of the law came to seek him in the Deer Park and hearing his word, they accepted it. And thus, in three months when he had sixty disciples, Buddha gathered them together and bade them go forth as mendicants bringing the word of the new truth.

He himself turned his footsteps back to Uruvela, for there were living three brothers, the Kasyapas, whose fame as worshippers of Agni, the eternal fire, was spread afar. And Maha-Kasyapa the elder, was predestined to be one of the Buddha's greatest disciples. Buddha, knowing his devotion to Fire, talked to Maha-Kasyapa on the true

meaning of Agni, not as the consuming fire of desire, but as the path to the liberation of the spirit, and listening to him, the Elder Kasyapa and his brothers turned to the Teachings of Gautama. With Kasyapa, Buddha journeyed to Rajagriha, scene of much of his later life's teaching. There he met the powerful King Bimbisara whose heart at once melted to the words of the Sakyamuni. Thenceforth Bimbisara became one of the most devoted pupils of the Buddha—and with him was converted his court. Wishing to have the Enlightened One often near him, King Bimbisara presented him with the Grove near his palace, and here Buddha came throughout his ministry as was the custom, during the rainy season, to pronounce his teaching to his disciples, gathered about him.

The fame of the Great Teacher, who was bringing a new doctrine of liberation to mankind, spread afar. And soon it reached the land of the Sakyas. Thereupon King Suddhodana sent a messenger to his son, begging him to visit again his native city. Accompanied by his disciples, Buddha set out to the country of his birth; there, where, as a prince, he had once lashed his being in the imprisonment of earthly pleasure, he now came as a mendicant and a freed spirit. But, in the manner of his doctrine, he did not enter the city, but remained on the outskirts, where with his beggar's bowl he sought alms and his sustenance, from house to house. His father, saddened at the news that his son was seeking alms as a common mendicant, determined to go to him personally and beseech him to forego his begging. The scene of their meeting reveals all

the poignant drama of this sovereign who still could not understand the transcendent spirit of his son.

To his Father's request, Buddha answered, "Oh Maharaaja, this is the custom of all our race." . . . King Suddhodana answered his son, "Our race is the Kshattriyas of the noble line of Ishavaku, and none of our race has ever begged his bread." . . . "That is thy race," answered his son. "My race is the Buddhas who have lived before me. And these have ever lived on alms." Suddhodana then understood and led him into the palace, where all came before him, save only Yasodara, his wife. But the Buddha himself went to her, and she fell before him, embraced his feet, and as she listened to his words, the truth of his Teaching also illumined her and she became one of the first Bikkunis, or Buddhist nuns in the later order for women created by the Buddha. His son, who at the behest of Yasodara had asked his Father for his inheritance, was also initiated into the order—for to Buddha, not the earthly inheritance was important, but the truth which he could pass on as a heritage.

Among Siddartha's kinfolk during his visit many turned as converts to the Doctrine—among these followers two take their parts in the Buddhist epic as signal protagonists; Ananda, his cousin, who became the attendant and constant companion of the Buddha, the most beloved disciple, whose endless devotion to his Master lent fragrance to the entire narrative of Buddhism. Simplicity and complete consecration to his Guru mark Ananda throughout his life of discipleship, as the constant attendant of Buddha. Quite other was the role of Devadatta, another cousin,

who, although affecting to embrace the doctrine, throughout his life sought to foil the victories of Siddhartha. Ambition, rage, and jealousy obsessed him and the dark thread of his betrayals runs through the ministry of the Buddha—constantly frustrated in his desire to overthrow and even kill the Enlightened One, Devadatta attempted to found his own order. In the history of Buddhism he assumes the position of an inexorable antagonist, the Judas, against the foil of whose conspiracies the works of the Illumined One glow the more. Nor was Devadatta's treachery the only trial of the Enlightened One. The Brahmins of his day, who resented his talk of spiritual equality, denounced him. No less resentful were the ascetics whose fanatic practices Buddha exposed as useless and vain.

"All your rules," said Buddha to the fanatics, "are base and ridiculous. Some of you walk naked, covering yourselves only with your hands; some will not eat out of a jug or a plate, will not sit at the table between two speakers, between two knives, or two plates; some will not sit at the common table and will not accept alms in a house where there is a pregnant woman, or where you will notice many flies or meet a dog. . . .

"One nurtures himself only on vegetables, with a brew of rice, with cow or deer dung, roots of trees, branches, leaves, forest fruit or seeds. One wears his robe thrown only over the shoulder, or covers himself only with moss, the bark of a tree, plants or reindeer skin, wears his hair loose or puts on a hair band. One wears the garment of

sorrow, always holds his hands up, does not sit on a bench or mat, or always sits in the manner of an animal. . . .

“One lies on prickly plants or cow dung. . . .

“I shall not enumerate other similar means by which you torture and exhaust yourselves. . . .

“Asceticism is useful only when it does not conceal covetous motives.”

Much has been written about the final years of the Buddha—as though it were necessary that the cliché of his human departure should be branded in the perspective of history and that humanity should remember him as a man who had to carry the burdens and responsibilities of life's agonies, even while he wrestled to free all humanity of a dark assailant.

One of the trials of these years was the annihilation of his native land and his people by a neighboring clan. As Natalie Rokotoff tells us, “The legends relate that Buddha being far from the city with His beloved disciple Ananda, at the time of the attack on His country, felt a severe headache and lay down on the ground, covering Himself with his robe, in order to hide from the only witness the sorrow which overcame His stoical heart.”

In the forty-fifth year of his ministry, when he was eighty years old, he seemed aware of his approaching end. For, after a long illness during the rainy season, he passed again through many villages of Vaisali, earnestly repeating the words of his teaching to his disciples and preparing them for his coming departure. Setting before them the ideal of Arhatship during these months, he emphasized to his followers the need of practising and perfect-

ing their spirit in the teaching so that the Doctrine might be perpetuated for the ages to come. Forewarning them that he would remain among them but three months longer, he bade them remember the great Law of self-discipline, for this was the one way to annihilate forever the causes of sorrow.

During this journey, he stopped at a place called Pava. There Chunda, a goldsmith and one of his followers, rejoicing at the Master's presence, begged that he might prepare a meal for him. Buddha consented and ate the repast, asking Chunda, however, not to serve the meat to his disciples, but to the Buddha alone. Having eaten, Buddha continued on his journey, but soon was overcome with illness and only with difficulty at last reached Kusinagara, the grove which was the scene of his final Nirvana. In those last hours, the great compassion of the Teacher is constantly evident. Feeling that Chunda might reproach himself because his meal had brought on the final illness of the Buddha, he admonished Ananda to ease Chunda and assure him that the last offering given to a Buddha before his passing is especially blessed, and that Chunda must therefore rejoice since he would receive his reward in some future life.

He also discoursed with Ananda, his life-long companion, on the rules of the order. But Ananda, hearing the Lord give his final instructions, was filled with sorrow and went apart to weep, saying to himself, "I am not yet perfect and my Teacher is passing away; he who is so kind." But Gautama sent for him, and knowing his sorrow, said, "Ananda, do not let yourself be saddened, and



do not weep. All must part from that which we hold most dear and no being can overcome the dissolution inherent in it. But you, Ananda, have long endeared yourself to me by kindness; you who have constantly persevered, continue to strive and you, too, shall win liberation from life."

Then, turning to his disciples who had gathered about him, he commended Ananda to them, for his great selflessness and kindness. He also thus admonished his pupils, "When I am gone, you must not think that the Teaching has ended. Set your hopes in the laws and rules of the order. Be ye lamps unto yourselves."

Then he asked his assembled disciples if any had a question to ask him before it was too late. None came forward, then Buddha said,

"Mendicants, I now repeat to you, decay is inherent in all living things; work out your salvation with diligence."

And with these words the Teacher passed into his Maha-Nirvana, leaving his Teaching as the lamp for his disciples. Thus passed to his mergence with the Divine, One of the most resplendent human beings the world has known.

Predicated upon the premise that existence is suffering, the entire direction of Buddha's teaching was to liberate a man from the necessity of earthly existence, to render him free from the chains of lust which attached him to earth. And these chains could be cleft by the path of disci-

pline and self-control in thought, in speech, in action and in the daily habits of a man's life. For the attainment of liberation he gave the Eightfold Path, the middle way of discrimination.

Beyond the predicates set forth in his discourses, there were no inflexible rituals or laws in the Buddhist order, or Sangha—communities established by Gautama. The teacher constantly sought in this way to avoid any iron-clad rules which might become the instruments of zealotry among his followers. He asked of those seeking entrance to his order, renunciation of property and moral purity.

Like all the great reformers, he preached a doctrine which was open to all men, equally, without thought of caste or position. Kings and beggars were among his pupils. And his teaching was imparted in the manner of all the Teachers, through parables, through discourses to his pupils as the occasion of a lesson presented itself. The emphasis of his entire word was that a man meet the assaults of delusion and ignorance and dispel them through self-control. By conquering these desires and tests on earth, man would not need to worry over the demands of heaven. This emphasis on the conquest of the immediate trials of the spirit, often brought upon Buddha accusations of atheism, and the fundamentalists cited his teaching as one of denial and pessimism. But Buddha refused to permit his pupils to divert themselves with intriguing speculations on an after-life, instead of learning the discipline of thought, word and deed. For, like Confucius, like Zoroaster, he knew the lures of metaphysical

digressions to a thither-mirage, which could divert men so easily from the one path of enlightenment, that of self-conquest. "What victories could Heaven give us, we must be conquerors here on earth," he admonished them. His words might well recall Christ's reminder to his disciples, that not understanding things of earth, how could they hope to understand the things of the spirit. Denial of an after-life was not in the Teachings of the Buddha, but he felt that the battlefield for men was earth and that heaven itself might be stormed and conquered by earthly achievements.

Although the fundamentalists of his time sought to stigmatize Buddha with the opprobrious name of "heretic"—nevertheless at no time could they have pointed to any denial of the Vedic teachings on the part of the Buddha. He simply gave new interpretations to old forms, which had become encrusted in the minds of contemporaries with all the conventions of the letter, rather than the spirit. Discountenancing the life of pleasure and lust, he also saw no virtue in the excessive asceticism which, to him, was a form of conceit if pursued for itself. As he said, "It is not enough to be naked, covered with mud, sprinkled with water, to live beneath a tree or in solitude, or to starve oneself." It was the inner purification that was important—the cleansing of the heart and spirit. "If the cloth be dirty, however much the dyer might dip it into blue, yellow, red or lilac dye, its color will be ugly and unclear—Why? Because of the dirt in the cloth. If the heart is impure one must expect the same results." He spoke of the middle path, because fanaticism, which de-

prived a man of clear understanding and tranquillity of spirit, was against his doctrine. "In order that the strings of the *vina* should produce a harmonious sound they should be neither strained nor too loose. So with each effort; if it is excessive, it ends in a futile waste of energy; if it is niggardly it turns into passivity." Thus, self-discipline was the one word which covered his doctrine, for as he said, "If a man conquer himself he is a far greater conqueror than if he conquers a thousand men in battle."

Into his Teachings there came the great refining forces of tolerance and compassion—he himself throughout his life, radiated a compassionate love for his disciples and for all men. But he severely reproved insincerity and hypocrisy.

The severest attacks against the Buddhist teachings by the fundamentalists of his day were due to his refusal to accept the belief in the continuous and unchanging soul—as they interpreted absolute Monism. To Buddha, there existed no unchanging and continuous force throughout the cosmos. The stream of life, to which he constantly referred and which in modern terminology might be called evolution, predicated continuous movement and continuous flux. Hence, to him it was inconceivable that any unchanging individual soul could finally merge into any unchanging Universal Soul. He saw life as a constant stream eternally moving out into an Infinite Principle, which in Itself was eternally evolving and moving. Thus his idea of the succession of births was not that of transmigration, in which an immortal soul moved into body after body. For him life was the sum-

total of certain qualities or skandhas, or aggregates. And these qualities regrouped themselves in a succession of lives, each bound to the other, perhaps as links in a chain, but each link a new and separate life. As he said, it was as though the flame of a dying candle were used to light a new candle—the second would not be the same as the first, yet its light would be regarded as continuous. The determining factor in the new grouping of aggregates forming the new life or incarnation would be Karma—that which the man had sowed and desired in his previous lives. Man was the creator of his destiny, reaping the harvest of his own attachments, his desires, and the causes he set into motion by thought, word and deed. Thus, the final desire before death—since it was believed to synthesize the man's crystal of life—was an important factor in determining the coming existence.

As mentioned before, the principle of Karma, of cause and effect, is basic in all Indian teachings—as the Buddha expressed it, "Man is born according to what he has created. All beings have Karma for their heritage." Karma could be dissolved by the strict adherence to self-discipline; for thus desire was removed, and man's spirit could rise above the temptations and agitations of earth to a complete, untroubled continence of spirit.

Buddha established no ritual nor priesthood. But he founded his Community for the Teaching, because he thereby emphasized the aspect of cooperation and the commitment to a life of discipline. But entrance to the Community required no severe renunciations—a man was expected to forego possession of property and to be of pure

morals. The sincere desire to follow the precepts of the Enlightened One was considered a sufficient requisition. He was then asked to accept the threefold credo: "I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Teaching; I take refuge in the Community." Although strict self-control was demanded, excessive severity was not practiced, and the individual needs of the members of the community were also understood. At times Buddha refused to permit some of the members of the community, who were feeble or unaccustomed to trials, to exercise the disciplinary measures he exacted from others. In this way, he removed the obsessive concern with form, in his order. This principle of individual liberty to the member of the community was always maintained by Buddha even when Devadatta, under threat of creating a schism in the community, demanded that Buddha intensify the stringency of his rules. The Enlightened One refused, on the grounds that any inflexible general rules might become a hindrance to many, since different conditions of life demanded different consideration. His understanding and compassion for his pupils were endless. It was necessary only that men should seek with complete sincerity of heart the path to Nirvana, and the liberation of the spirit, and strive towards a mastery of self.

Thus, when Anathapindika, a man of great wealth and of equally great philanthropies among the poor, came to him, and asked whether he would be doing better by renouncing all his wealth and adopting the homeless life of the monk, Buddha replied: "The Bliss of the righteous life is attainable by everyone who walks in the noble

Eightfold Paths. He that is attached to wealth had better cast it away than allow his heart to be poisoned by it; but he who does not cleave to wealth and who, possessing riches, uses them rightly, will be a blessing to his fellow-beings.

"I say to thee, remain in thy station of life and apply thyself with diligence to thy enterprises. It is not life and wealth and power that enslave men, but their attachment to life and wealth and power."

Nor was a man bound forever to the Community—if he desired to leave the order, he had only to say, "I no longer believe" and departed. And, if he applied again for admittance, he was not reproached. He was only asked, "Do you deny any longer?"—and if he expressed utter faith, he could re-enter the Community as a member.

Numerous are the stories which come down to us of Buddha and his disciples and the discourses of the Enlightened One along the path of his life. In these superb episodes which point out the tolerance of his doctrine, we see the constant compassion of this truly Elect Spirit. Thus one remembers his compassionate lesson to Kisa-gotami, whose child had died and who brought his body to the Buddha to restore it to life. "I will restore it, if you bring me a bit of mustard seed from that home in which there has been no death," said the Enlightened One. Kisagotami eagerly set out to find the mustard seed, joyfully foreseeing the resurrection of her son. From house to house she walked—all gladly offered the mustard seed, but when she asked the fatal question, "And

has there been a death of a near one in this home?" she found no home which death had not visited. And as she visited family after family without success, for none had been spared separation from their beloved ones, she understood the deep implication of the Master's word, for her own test was but the test of all men. Then, accepting the death of her child, she came to the Buddha expressing her realization of the Truth, and asked for admission to the Order.

Throughout the Teaching of Buddha the essence is beauty and discipline. Its authenticity has been enhanced by the extraordinary character of its Propounder—for the visage of Buddha, well called the Light of Asia, stands out not as a myth, but as a man who by the example of his own life and spiritual conquests created one of the most glowing epics of history.

So significant was the impact of his personality, that faiths which outwardly rejected his Doctrine, could not overlook the luminous aspect of his life. And even the Hinduism which rose up after his passing, admitted him into its conclave of the Elect. He was proclaimed as the Ninth Avatar or Incarnation of Vishnu, the Divine Redeemer, and as such, a Vessel come to illumine men. And, even the Christian faith has accepted him in the Community of the Saints, under the name of Saint Josaphat, perhaps even unaware that this luminous personality whom Saint John of Damascus included in his Saints' calendar was none other than the great Teacher of Asia. Saint John of Damascus had taken his story from the life of the Blessed One in the Lalitavistara, and thereon



inscribed the tale of "Barlaam and Josaphat"—thus the Boddhisatva became Josaphat and entered the company of the Saints of Christianity.

The spread of Buddhism is perhaps without equal in any religion. Almost immediately after his death a council of his followers was held in Rajagriha and later one in Vaisali, both scenes of his life-long teaching. But, with the invariable destiny of all doctrines, the followers began disagreements of questions of interpretation of the Doctrine. Finally the unhealable division between two sects set in—Hinayana and Mahayana—the former leaning to an orthodox interpretation of self-development; the latter emphasized the ideal of the Boddhisatvas, or Compassionate Ones, who strive for salvation for all men.

For both the Hinayana and Mahayana Sects, however, one Boddhisatva is equally revered—the Boddhisatva Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, the successor of Gautama, and the new Instrument of Salvation. For this Buddha awaited among all Buddhist sects, the authority is none other than Buddha himself who proclaimed the coming Maitreya to Ananda. "I am not the first Buddha who has come upon earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise in the world, a Holy One, a supremely enlightened One endowed with wisdom, auspicious, embracing the Universe, an incomparable Leader of men, a Ruler of Devas and mortals. He will reveal to you the same eternal truths, which I have taught you. He will establish His Law, glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax and glorious at the goal in spirit and in the letter. He will proclaim a righteous life wholly

perfect and pure such as I now proclaim. His disciples will number many thousand while mine number many hundreds."

"Ananda asked, 'And shall we know Him?'

"To which the Blessed One said, 'He will be known as Maitreya'."

And towards the Coming of the Boddhisatva Maitreya, the new Buddha, the entire Buddhist world looks with consecrated hope, as the great deliverance of humanity. For this new manifestation of the Divine Efflatus will bring with Him, according to the word of Buddha, salvation to a world anguished, longing, and in need of His Compassionate aid.

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A great impetus to Buddhism came in the Third Century B.C. when the religion was once again infused with new life by the ardor of the great King Asoka of the Maurian dynasty. This dynasty was founded by the grandfather of Asoka, Chandragupta, who in a bold stroke, gathered about him the hill tribes of the Punjab and assumed the throne of Magada, driving the armies of Alexander out of India. His grandson, Asoka, became converted to the doctrine of the Buddha, and so deeply did he follow the word of the Teaching that he has become the veritable Paul of Buddhism. His magnificent devotion to the faith is one of the flowers of Buddhist history. For not only did he do all possible to spread word of the Teaching throughout his great kingdom, but he

sought to spread the message of Buddha far beyond his Kingdom. His flaming ardor for the Doctrine is testified forever in the Pillars of Asoka, those milestones and slabs which he commanded to be engraved and set throughout his kingdom as tokens of his great faith. Their sincerity and tolerance give an insight, not only into the high-mindedness of Asoka's belief, but to the beauty of the Doctrine as he practiced it, still with the mark of the Teacher upon it.

So significant did Asoka regard the role of Buddhism in his government that he established an officer as the Chief Minister of Religion, whose function it was to see to the purity of religion and to strive in the spreading of the faith of Sakyamuni. The zeal of this king is apparent also in his efforts to acquaint other countries with the bliss that he himself acknowledged in the word of the Buddha. His own son, Mahendra, who had been admitted to the order twelve years earlier, was sent as a messenger of the New Order to Ceylon with a band of monks. There King Tusa received this mission with great favor and himself adopted the new faith. Mahendra whose dedication to the Teaching was as great as his father's, spent his entire life in Ceylon, building shrines and monasteries and spreading the Dharma. A little later he also sent for his sister, who was a member of the female Buddhist order. Arriving with a group of nuns, she taught among the women of Ceylon, aiding her brother's work. As a precious relic, she also brought with her a branch of the sacred Bo-tree under which Buddha had gained his illumination; this was planted in Anuradhapura. This tree,

spreading its roots and branches, still stands as witness to the two millenniums which have flowed by since the great Siddhartha challenged the forces of eternity.

From this beginning in Ceylon, through the successive centuries, Buddhism has cut across all Asiatic boundaries, reaching Siam, China, Japan and thence across the entire mountains and deserts of Central Asia. The Prince of the Sakyas, whose father grieved that he had lost a throne, won an empire of which no temporal king had ever dreamt. Centuries have passed since Kapilavasthu has crumbled in dust; the tribe of Sakyas is long forgotten save for the name of Sakyamuni. But, in the name of Gautama, millions of men have donned the yellow robe and, taking the beggars' bowl, have sought the Liberation of the spirit through Dharma, the doctrine of Buddha.

Within India, the land of its birth, however, Buddhism was destined to have a strange destiny. It flourished for some centuries after the great impetus given to it by Asoka, until the Fifth or Sixth Centuries. By then, the division of its own forces as well as the impacts of the popular rising Hinduism and the inroads of Islam, had depleted its ranks in India. It then began to wither away as an organized body, until from the Eighth to the Thirteenth Century it virtually disappeared as one of India's major philosophic strongholds, save in Nepal and Ceylon where it resolutely has maintained its following until today.

The Buddhist doctrine however rapidly spread abroad into China about the First Century, thence into Korea in the Fourth Century; to Japan in the Sixth Century; as

well as into Afghanistan, Turkestan, Burma, Siam, Tibet and Mongolia.

The story of Buddhism's penetration into each country of Asia fashions an epic which we may not enter into, in this brief study. Its successive attempts to enter China were at first futile, finally aided in the First Century by a dream of the Emperor Ming-Ti who saw a Golden Image with its head enveloped in an aureole of light, which soared from heaven and hovered over the Imperial Palace. Conceiving this as the command of heaven to welcome Buddhism, Ming Ti sent for the Buddhist books from far-off India. This however did not end later persecution of Buddhism in China, and only in the Third and Fourth Centuries was permission given for men to become Buddhist monks, and did Buddhism become a State Religion. Its real headway came later, in the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang in the Sixth Century, when he welcomed the austere Boddhi Darma and with him the Zen Faith.

A century later saw the Buddhist Gospel introduced into Tibet, in the reign of King Srong Tsan Gampo, who about 640 sent his ambassadors to India, and introduced into his kingdom the gospel of Nepal. It is this king who married two wives—both Princesses one from Nepal and one from China. And it is said that they brought with them, as their dowry into Tibet, sacred images of Buddha. Thus the conversion of Tibet to the gospel of Buddhism gives praise to these first women of the faith, believed to be aspects of the Divine Tara. However, the doctrine suffered greatly in the successive two centuries, by the in-

roads of the Bon-Po, the animistic faith to which Tibet had previously been consecrated. But again in the Eighth Century, the King sent to India, for the great Teacher Padma Sambhava. It was he who organized the Red Sect of Tibet, the Lamaist organization, and gave to the doctrine of Buddha a new impetus. He was succeeded in the Conversion of Tibet by two great Teachers: the pure Atisha, in the Eleventh Century, and the resplendent Tzong Ka Pa in the Fifteenth Century. The latter established the Yellow or Gelugpa Sect of Tibetan Lamas, which still discloses the inspiration of its truly inspired organizer.

In China, as in Tibet, the doctrine of Buddha has taken on new variations. China has added a diverse Hierarchy of Boddhisatvas and Arhats and Tutelary Deities. Among these, one of signal beauty and appeal, is the beloved feminine aspect of the Boddhisatva, Kuan-Yin, so close to the spirit of both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. As a feminine counterpart of the omniscient Boddhisatva Avalokitesvara of Mahayana Buddhism, this Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, Kuan-Yin, is a variation of the compassionate Universal Mother, who sheds her beneficence on all men alike. In China, Buddhism takes rank with Confucianism, Taoism as the third religion in the triad to which China makes obeisance.

In Tibet the system crystallized into a Hierarchy which had its Secular Head in the Dalai Lama, with his seat in the great Potala at Lhassa, while the religious head, the Panchen or Tashi Lama, had his seat in the Tashi Lunpo Monastery at Shigatse. During the succes-

sive centuries, Dalai Lamas succeeded each other, in a heritage of reincarnations, laid down by the doctrine. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama has now died and as yet Tibet has not found his incarnate successor. The Panchen Lama made a mysterious flight from Tibet in the year 1923. In accordance with traditions, this great flight presages the new Age—the age which will usher in the new advent, that of the Fifth Buddha, the Maitreya.

Mongolia joined the ranks of the Buddhist lands in the Thirteenth Century and when the great Kublai Khan came to the throne he encouraged its growth throughout his kingdom.

Thus, in many forms of more or less purity, Buddhism remains—the one stream which crosses all Asiatic boundaries. Despite the innumerable variations which each people and nation gave to the Doctrine, Asia at heart is still one in reverence to the great Sakyamuni.

Nor does Asia forget the promise of the Great Gautama Buddha—throughout the expanse of the vast continent, there pulses a hope that soon the tread of Buddha's promised Successor, the Maitreya, will be heard. And in the spring of His Compassion and His Teachings, the hatreds, the conflicts, the miseries of humanity, will be washed away. Nor does Asia regard this blessed hour as remote—already, Chintamani, the Treasure of the World and token of His Coming, has appeared. Already, a white horse is kept always saddled in Ispahan. Already, in accordance with age-old prophecies, Panchen Lama has departed from Tibet after building the Great Statue of the Coming One. Already, the new Images of Asia show the Maitreya,

no longer in the posture of meditation but with one foot upon the ground—the token that soon he will rise from his Lotus Throne. And in the sacred whispers of Shambhala, Agharti, Maitreya, Rigden Djepo and Gessar Khan—multiform Names for the One Great Advent—rises the united prayer of the Buddhist World: that Maitreya, the Compassionate Buddha, shall come soon to lead men out of the mazes of their errors, their delusions and hatreds, to a new humanity, such as the world has never known.

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### HINDUISM

The recession of Buddhism in India, made way for the reestablishment of new philosophic systems, all of which claimed their foundation in the Vedas, and which during the days of Buddhism's strength had been asserting themselves. The major philosophic systems of India are six—all basing their beliefs upon the interpretations of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and new epic and traditional literature which the generations were adding to the first religious expressions of the Aryans.

For the purposes of this outline, it will not be possible to enter into the intricate metaphysical shadings of each of these philosophies; suffice it to pass briefly over their general tendencies to show the extraordinary fertility of India's philosophic soil, and the incalculable multiformity of its religious cogitations. All six systems were possibly growing up simultaneously. One was the Nyaya system founded by Gotama (not the Buddha) who undoubtedly





THE COMMAND OF RIGDEN DJYEPO

From the Painting by Nicholas Rocrich



lived before his great namesake. Recognizing Ishvara the personal God, and taking the Vedas as his authority, Gotama built up a system purely inductive and analytic.

The Vaisheshika system, founded by Kanada is regarded as one of the most meticulous efforts at inductive and deductive reasoning. Again, upon the authority of the Vedas, its founder devised a system of atomistic character, by which he leads jiva, the human monad, to final liberation through a round of rebirths. The Sankhya System, accredited to the great philosopher Kapila is a dualistic system, opposing insentient matter to soul matter.

The Yoga system, based on the Yoga Aphorisms of Pantajali, assumes great importance in all these philosophies. The Yoga as such is found in all aspects of Hindu thought because its systematic training of the individual aiming to liberation of the spirit, is an essence of all Indian beliefs. The Yoga is believed to have come down from Vedic times—it is a definite form of training ordained to be transmitted from Guru (teacher) to pupil whereby the purely intellectual functions are disciplined, thus making room for the liberation of the intuitive and spiritual functions, and an eventual union with the Great Stream of Cosmos. There are various systems of Yoga, some denounced as dangerous and fostering only psychic calisthenics—such a system as the Hatha Yoga system. But such systems as Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga—based upon the discipline of the individual towards self-perfection, are regarded as lofty idealistic training, having self-perfection as their goal and aiming towards liberation from egoism and union with the Divine. In

addition to control of breathing, called pranayama or exercises which bring the entire being into harmony with the rhythmic stream of the universe, the Yoga systems aim to give men that control of thought, of speech, of action, of emotion, which will raise them to new sensibilities of consciousness and spirit. In a manner, Yoga as such enters into all Hindu Systems of philosophy, because though they may vary in metaphysical approaches, all accept the eventual possibility of liberation from the delusions of separate existence to the one stream of the Eternal.

The two final systems are termed the lower and higher vehicles, the Purva Mimamsa and the Uttara Mimamsa. The latter, embodied in the Vedanta teaching, is one of the greatest contributions to Hindu philosophy. Turning back to the Upanishads as the source of its inspiration, the Vedanta teaching has been enriched by some of India's greatest philosophic minds, each of whom has added some aspect to its literature and philosophy. Among the two early brilliant figures who reveal themselves in the Vedanta teaching are the brilliant Sankaracharya, one of the greatest figures in all Hindu philosophy, and Ramanuja. Though Vedantists may vary as to whether they believe in a pure Monist system (Advaita) or the modified Monist system, in basic beliefs their ideas are united along lines which present one of the most universal of Hindu teachings, drawing from all India's finest sources in a teaching of great purity and devotional character. Brahman, to the Vedantist, is at once the eternal cognizer and the cognized, the cause and the effect—that One-ness,

which is expressed for the Hindu in the term *Neti*, Not That, because its essence is unencompassable.

Only illusion and ignorance, the force of *Maya*, will permit a man to believe that he is separate from that One, or from the whole stream of the universe. And it is man's destiny to illumine his being until the sense of non-separateness and Identity with the Stream of the Eternal Life becomes for him the one Reality. Karma and reincarnation again are the great instruments for the working out of this salvation. A man must dissolve his karma by raising himself beyond the level of human emotional flickerings to the steadfastness of mind, heart and spirit, which enable him to throw off the veil of *Maya* and perceive the Eternal One.

To India, the Vedanta system has given one of its greatest modern figures—Ramakrishna, regarded as a saintly incarnation. A simple man, from his youth, he seemed filled with the ecstasy of a god love. The spirit of *Bhakti*—or rapture for the divine—so reminiscent of the Assisian, filled all his days and illumined his person—and at his feet sat the greatest men and women of all India, to learn that which he had gathered in his moments of *Samadhi* or union with the Divine. In the life of modern India, he takes his place as a witness that the spirit of god-intoxication still thrives in the soil of *Aryavart*ha.

In addition to the great philosophic systems of India, there remains the religion of the people, which has synthesized itself into the reverence for two great aspects of *Isvara*, the godhead—*Vishnu* and *Siva*. Hence in the Hindu popular sects there are the *Vishnavites* who wor-

ship Vishnu, and Sivaïtes, who worship Siva. These two images of the Hindu Pantheon, comparatively unimportant in the original Vedas, take on primary importance in the later religious writings of India, the Puranas, as well as in the two great Epics of India—the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These, with the Laws of Manu, must be regarded as an essential part of the sacred literature of Hinduism.

Before turning to the two great Epics of India, we may pause briefly to consider the Puranas and the Laws of Manu, which form part of this later traditional literature, or as it was called, the Smriti—"that which is remembered." There are eighteen Puranas or "Ancient Matters." These are in three parts of Six Puranas each, dedicated to the great Trimurti or Trinity of later Hinduism—Brahma, the Creator; Siva, the Destroyer; and Vishnu, the Redeemer. Each Purana concerns itself with the evolution of the Universe—its creation and destruction; its recreation after the great deluge; the genealogy of gods and heroes; the great cycles of cosmos, or Manvantaras over each of which a Manu presided; and also the history of the solar and lunar kings. In a manner, the Puranas were intended to give a more popular character to the Vedic literature.

According to the Puranas, the creation was consummated by the exhaling of Brahma, the Creator. By his outflowing breath Brahma gives form to all existing things and as he exhales he begins the Day of Brahma, as it is called. This Day of Brahma constitutes 4,320,000,000 years—and is known also as a Kalpa. At its expiration,

Brahma inhales and all external forms merge again into his formless being, for a full Night of Brahma, when cosmos is formless waiting again for its emergence into matter. The Kalpa comprises fourteen Manvantaras or periods, each identified by special attributes and governed by a successive Manu. According to the Puranas, the universe is now passing through the Kali-Yuga, an age of disintegration and chaos. But this age is already waning, and with the coming Satya-Yuga, a new age will be ushered in, and the world will be regenerated.

Although the Puranas tell of the various aspects of Siva and Vishnu, it is the latter who seems closest to humanity, in his aspect as the Redeemer of the Trinity. As the compassionate aid of the human race, Vishnu is believed to take human form and incarnate in Avatars or successive Advents. These Avatars come to humanity in the midst of its need—and already Vishnu has had nine Avatars, during each of which he saved the human race in some manner. It was, for instance, Vishnu, in the form of his Fish-Avatar, who appeared in the epoch when the deluge destroyed the world. Ordaining the building of a great ship, he saved Manu, the one worthy man of earth, who then became the progenitor of the new human race.

The last three Avatars of Vishnu have been successively Rama, Krishna and Buddha. The Tenth Avatar, known as the Kalki Avatar, or the Avatar of the White Horse, will appear when the dread Kali-Yuga, so filled with human sorrow, comes to an end. Then will this New Redeemer of the human race appear upon a white horse with a comet blazing like a sword in his hand. For the new

Avatar will be a veritable King of the spirit—and he comes with the fiery sword of justice to vanquish the enemies of mankind. Everywhere in the Hindu world, the symbol of the white horse is used, bearing witness to the hope of the new race.

The Laws of Manu, which tradition holds were inscribed by the Manu of this Manvantara, constitute the foundation of all Hindu laws. Their actual age is unknown but Hindu tradition holds that they were inscribed by the first Manu, no less than thirty million years ago. In this Codex, this first progenitor of earth set down the fundamental laws and tenets for all castes. The rules cover a range as great as life itself—beginning with the relationships which should pertain between teacher and pupil. For the Guru, as teacher, is held to be the true father of his pupil and Manu sets forth this honor due from the pupil to his mentor. The laws of Manu—too various to quote—provide the code which must govern marriages, funerals, means of livelihood, foods, domestic affairs, and hygienic habits. It also concerns itself with the procedures of justice. In fact it is the high authority to which subsequent lawmakers of India have gone as their guide in determining the foundation of social intercourse.

### VISHNU AND SIVA

Vishnu, as is seen, is the great symbol of devotion, and the preserver of Life, who takes form through the ages in Avatars, or special human instruments for the salvation of men. Siva is the symbol of active creative power, in his



zeal for creation, he may at times destroy, since destruction may also be the precursor to creation. He therefore also takes on the aspect of Destroyer in some of the Hindu cults.

There are numerous Sivaite sects in India—for Siva is worshipped in diverse aspects. Most numerous are the sects dedicated to Siva as the begetter of life, or the great Yogin. The symbol of Siva is the lingam, as the symbol of procreative force. As a departure from the Vedic pantheon where the female deities were comparatively few, the Sivaite sects place great stress on the feminine counterpart of the god, or his Sakti as she is called. Thus, in his images he is accompanied by his consort, who is sometimes called Devi. She also, as Siva, may at times be benevolent but at other times, an austere deity, reaping vengeance where needed. Hence she is sometimes worshipped under the guise of Gauri, the radiant one; Parvati, the daughter of the mountain; Durga, the unapproachable one, or the fierce Kali, the avenger, crushing the rebellious deniers of her force.

Sacred to Siva is the bull as the symbol also of creative energy. But save in certain dark "Shakta" sects, these symbols are given the impersonal implication of humanity's reverence, since time immemorial, for the mystery of creation and its dedication to the powers which control this creation.

Of the Avatars of Vishnu, two stand out as among the most superb of India, represented by the heroic figures of Aryavārtha—Rama and Krishna.

Around the stories of Rama and of Krishna, have been

composed the two great epics of India, the Ramayana and even more important, the Mahabharata. The Hindu surrounds these great heroic poems with scriptural reverence.

The Ramayana is the story of Prince Rama, the favorite son and rightful heir of the King of Oudh, whose life is darkened by a secret promise long since given to one of his wives that her son, Bharata, should rule the kingdom after him. Rama, learning of his father's promise, and wishing to spare him the pain of a choice between his sons, sets out into voluntary exile with his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshman. His father dies of a broken heart and Bharata, himself innocent and deeply faithful to his half-brother, beseeches Rama to return and rule the kingdom. Unwilling even after his death to desecrate his father's promise, Rama appoints Bharata as his regent and sets out on a life devoted to destroying the dark forces. Among the most insidious of these is Surpanakha, a hideous Rakshasa or demoniac female fury, who has become enamoured of Rama. Thinking to win him, she has inspired her brother, Ravana, to carry off Sita to his Kingdom. By strategy, Ravana contrives to entice Rama and Lakshman from Sita, and thence coming upon her in the form of a beggar, carries her off to his kingdom Lanka (Ceylon). Then follows the great tale of her final rescue after many peregrinations and dangers. In the heroic exploits which result in her rescue, the animal kingdom plays a great part, and it is the host of Hanuman, leader of the monkeys, which finally helps in the rescue of the Princess.

Thus, Rama becomes the destroyer of the demons. And

Sita, his wife, who remains faithful to him through her imprisonment, is the symbol of perfect womanhood—universalizing an aspect of Vishnu and his divine Consort.

For the Hindu, however, no figure stands out with more radiance or more inspiring beauty than that of Krishna—the great apotheosis of the religion of Bhakti or devotional ecstasy. No incarnation of Vishnu is so dearly beloved and Krishna's image is encircled by Hindus with the feeling of youth, of beauty, of valor, of splendor and of the ravishing enticement of the Divine One. The Epic of the Mahabharata in which the Krishna appears as Godhead is the story of the rivalry and war between the two Houses of Pandavas and the Kurus, close kin. The thread of Krishna's life runs through this mosaic which takes these noble kinsmen through their childhood together, to the drama of internecine warfare. Subsequent tales in the Puranas also complete the picture of Krishna as it is worshipped in India—according to tradition, Krishna was born in Mathura of the race of the Yadavas, and was a nephew of the reigning king. Earlier prophecies had declared that the King would be killed by his eighth nephew and thus the King orders the massacre of each son of his sister as it is born. At Krishna's birth, with the aid of the divine forces, Vasudeva, his father, brings him secretly to Brindaban to be brought up as a shepherd lad. The story of his childhood is replete with miraculous exploits, as a joyful youth with the gopis or shepherd maidens, his playmates. Hearing of the great feats of the lad, the King, suspecting treachery, has him summoned to court, thus bringing on

the end which he had desired to evade. Krishna then becomes King of the Yadavas.

The luminous episode of his life—when Krishna reveals his effulgent person as the incarnation of the Godhead is related in the Mahabharata and comes in the battle of the Pandavas where he acts as charioteer of Arjuna, hero leader of the troops. Driving the chariot toward the battle scene, Krishna halts the chariot—and Arjuna looks out at the great opposing ranks of warriors, all his kinsmen. Terrible despair falls over Arjuna as he realizes that in this dread civil war, he must fight those who are dear to him, his cousins, with whom he passed his youth, his closest kin. He is borne down by the horror of what is to pass—his one desire is to flee from the scene of battle. At this moment, Krishna takes on his true rôle as the divine Godhead. There then occurs the great dialogue, called the “Bhagavat Gita,” the Song of the Lord, which constitutes an interlude in the Epic, and which may be regarded as the Hindu gospel, for it is prized by the Hindus above all other writings. As the temple invocations to the Gita say: “The Gita is the precious milk drawn from the udders of the Upanishad to nourish the soul.” And truly the Gita has crystallized the beauty of all India’s loftiest teachings, in their multiform direction, into one call of pure ecstasy.

In a series of eighteen short discourses, the great Bhagavat, Lord Krishna, sets forth to his disciple, Arjuna, the paths of liberation for the spirit. These are perhaps epitomized in the superb words, “By whatever path you come to me, I shall welcome you. For all paths are mine.”

Thus according to the words of the Lord Krishna, the Truth is one, but its outer manifestations are called by many names. To the final possession of Truth there are many ways, and so long as the spirit is filled with devotion to the great Image of Perfection, so long as he labors for the sake of work and not its fruits, so long will his way be the right one, leading to That One which is all things to all men.

Not without reason has the "Bhagavat Gita" become endeared to all Hindus—for sheer beauty alone, it takes its place among the superb literary writings of the world. With this, its entire burden is one of exquisite compassion, of joy. Its call to spiritual liberation is bathed in exultation, and in rapture of spirit.

As the Song of the Lord begins, the chariot, driven by Krishna, stands halted between the two great armies. Beholding his beloved ones, Arjuna despairs and he exclaims:

"My limbs fail, and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stands on end. Better that I, myself, should be slain than to kill those precious kinsmen who are before me, verily only from the pleasure of kingship."

Krishna, in his effulgent divine aspect, reproves him, and bids Arjuna throw off his impotence. He reminds him that as a Kshattriya, a warrior-born, it is his duty and Karma to fight those battles which are before him, that it is a delusion to speak of the living or the dead, when all existence is One and eternal:

"He who regardeth this as a slayer and who thinketh he is slain, both of them are ignorant. He slayeth not nor

is he slain. He is not born nor does he die; nor having been, ceaseth he any more to be; unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered.

"Who knoweth himself indestructible, perpetual, unborn, undiminishing, who can that man slay, O partha, or cause to be slain?"

"As a man casting off worn-out garments, taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new."

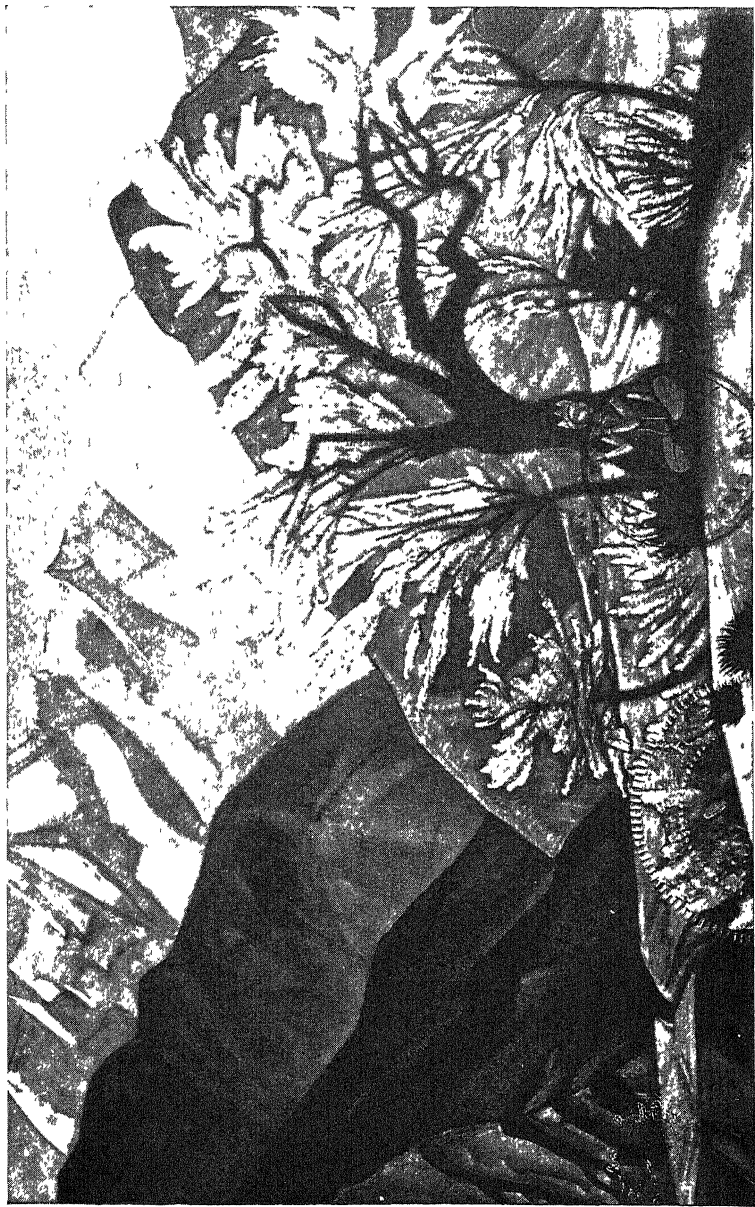
Thus, throwing off the mantle of uncertainty, he bids him fulfill the duty which is before him, free from desire for the fruits of his action, for "who so goeth onwards free from yearnings, self-less, and without egoism, he goeth on to Peace."

Action of itself may be also the way to the Lord, Krishna tells Arjuna, but it must not be darkened with desire. "It is desire, it is wrath begotten by the quality of motion; all consuming, all-polluting, know thou this as our foe here on earth.

"As the flame is enveloped by smoke; as a mirror by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so *This* is enveloped by it, enveloped inside by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is insatiable as a flame.

"The senses, the mind and the reason are its seat. By these enveloping wisdom it bewilders the dweller in the body."

In the course of the Celestial Song, Krishna reveals to Arjuna also the reappearance of the Divine Spirit in in-



KRISHNA

From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich





carnate form to help humanity: "Many births have been left behind Me and by thee, O Arjuna. I know them all but thou knowest not thine. . . . Whenever there is decay of righteousness and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then, I, Myself, come forth; for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly established righteousness, I am born from age to age."

In the words, which forever belie the criticism of pessimism in Eastern Faiths, Krishna proclaims the eternal guardianship over humanity by the Shining Ones, and Their Compassionate vigil.

In the many verses he sets forth the numerous paths of Liberation or Yogas, through devotion or Bhakti; through action; through the fulfillment of duty; through meditation; through the subdual of the self; through sacrifice. Thus, the Bhagavat Gita has truly woven together the flowers of all Hindu philosophies in an exquisite pronouncement of Universality. Above this superb dialogue runs the great theme of Bhakti, the call to that Love of god which shatters all impasses and brings the spirit face to face with its Beloved:

"Merge thy mind in Me; be My devotee; sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me; thou shalt come even to Me." . . . "He who sees Me in all things and everything in Me, of him I shall never lose hold and he shall never lose hold of Me."

Thus exquisitely is pronounced that final union—so deeply understood by the great processional of those who knew they were one with the Father. For like the Nirvana

of Buddhism, the Fana of Sufism, the Tao of China, the Golden Lotus of all Faiths is the Mergence with the Ineffable One.

And thus, perceiving truth, and freed from the desire for the fruits of his action, with his mind affixed on the One—Arjuna enters the battle. Perhaps no better symbol of the conquests of life could have been created than the field of battle. In its universal message, pronouncing the path of liberation which is open to every man upon the battlefield of life, the Bhagavat Gita unifies all threads of the Hindu faiths.

Before ending one may pause briefly to render respect to a new addition to the religions of India—in the sect of the Sikhs, who have taken somewhat the same fervid attitude to their faith as the Moslems. This sect of valorous warriors, who have won the respect of their fellow-Hindus by bravery, was founded in the Fifteenth Century by Vanaka, or as he is better known, Nanak. Studying both the Vedas and the precepts of Islam, he based his faith on a concept of Vishnu, but, in the manner of Islam, colored his doctrine with strict and deep belief in a single, formless God. For the Sikhs, Nanak is the great vessel of divine inspiration. In the faith of the Sikhs, there is high moral purpose and a sense of spiritual liberty. During the first centuries of its foundation, however, it met numerous assaults, both from the Hindus and the Moslems, since it eschewed both pathways. But its most severe blow came from the scourge of the dread Emperor Aurungzeb, whose destructive hand brought terror to India. Despite his attacks, the Sikhs evolved into a brave warrior and

religious sect, which long held the rule of the Punjab—a sect of noble strength of moral purity, which deserves to be added to the wreath of Hindu faiths.

It was this unification of all faiths of India which inspired the later resplendent historic figure of India, Akbar, the Great Mogul Emperor. Born a Moslem, he nevertheless perceived the urgent need of unity. And in the history of Indian faiths, the name of the Great Unifier, Akbar, must be included. In a heroic effort, which alas was destroyed after him, he nevertheless synthesized the ideal of Tolerance and Unity. In Fateh Pur Sikri, his home beyond Agra, there still stands the monument of this noble achievement, bringing its undying appeal. In essence, the sons of India know in their hearts the true meaning of the words of Abul Fazi, inscribed upon the walls of the Mosque of Akbar:

“O God, in every temple I see people that seek Thee, and in every  
language I hear people praise Thee!  
Polytheism and Islam feel after Thee,  
Each religion says, ‘Thou art one, without equal.’  
If it be a mosque, people murmur the holy prayer, and if it be a  
Christian Church, people ring the bell from love of Thee.  
Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the  
mosque.  
But it is Thou whom I seek from temple to temple.  
Thy elect have no dealings with either heresy or orthodoxy; for  
neither of them stands behind the screen of Thy truth.  
Heresy to the heretic, and orthodoxy to the orthodox,  
But the dust of the rose petal belongs to the heart of the perfume  
vendor.”

Within the boundaries of India, many faiths have found shelter—as though this land were a maternal

refuge for all who quested for god. Thus, when driven out of Persia by the Moslems, the Zoroastrians were forced to flee, it was here they found haven. Here, too, have come Moslems, Sufis, Jews and Christians—for, was it not Krishna and Buddha themselves, who spoke of the great tolerance?

To all who study this eternally grand processional of the philosophy of the ages, India's soil will remain dear and precious. For this land gave full hospitality to the spiritual bounty of all times—and men will remember that from this Motherland came the Vedas, came Rama and Krishna, came the resplendent Gautama Buddha, came the Rishis of old—all in their turn, bringing their message and their living evidence of the Compassion of the Sons of Fire.

# CHINA

THE DRAGON OF ANCIENT CHINA

CONFUCIUS

MENCIUS

LAO TZE

KWANG TZE



## II

### CHINA

#### THE DRAGON OF ANCIENT CHINA

THE dragon which is China emerges from a Past, hoary and fantasmagoric. If heaven lies about men in their infancy, so, too, does it pulsate about the infancy of nations. And of no nation is this more true than of China. China's infancy—rooted in immemorial time—breathes its fantastic tale of visible and invisible beings. To China, which was already ancient when Western nations were but awakening out of the Nebulous Unknown, man was but one part of a universe which thronged with incalculable entities. In and out of the lives of men, familiarly glided a host of spirits—spirits of trees, of mountains, of soil, of rain; mythical and never-heard-of beasts who brought their prophecies and gifts; and, in a constant processional, marched the spirits of the departed ancestors, who kept their vigilant and patriarchal watch over the doings of their posterity. Thus, there is a kind of polyphony in China's history—a contrapuntal interplay of humans, celestial spirits and nature spirits. And out of this kaleidoscopic co-ordination of life, the Chinese wove a pattern which constituted their first and continuous philosophic background.

Chinese philosophy of the genesis of earth holds that before the Creation, the universe was enfolded in Non-

Existence, an inconceivable Noumenon carrying for ages in its Awesome Womb all that was to be. Then by an inexplainable Urge this Great Non-Existence stirred, and gradually, through the ages, fused itself into the Great Monad, the Cosmic Egg. Aeons again passed—and again the Inexplicable Urge charged this Monad to divide itself into Duality. Thus did the two great principles of Male and Female come into being. These parent principles of earth, in their intercourse, begot all things and among them the first man, Pan Ku, the Son of Heaven, in whom the knowledge of all things was inherent at his conception.

Pan Ku was the great progenitor of the world. With a cohort composed of the Dragon, the Phoenix and the Unicorn, those fabled beasts of destiny, Pan Ku toiled for 18,000 years, setting the foundations of the earthly existence. And then, reaching the end of his allotted days, he became an undivided part of the scene of his labors. For, by some great mystic process, Pan Ku merged into the earth itself in a sacrificial identification with all its parts. Through this immolation of himself, Pan Ku became the veritable body of earth—his flesh became its fields; his veins, its rivers; his head, its mountains. Of his breath, the winds were born, and from his voice, the thunder. And stars, and metals, rocks, plants—all evolved from his being. And even the insects which clung to his body as he lay prostrate, evolved into the peoples of earth.

But it was not yet permitted for man to reign on earth—before the time of the great hero-emperors of China, three mighty epochs are recorded in the destiny of the



evolving universe. First came the Reign of Heaven when twelve brothers, the great Tien Wang, with bodies of serpents, presided over the universe for 18,000 years and formed the heavens. The Reign of Earth came next when Ti Wang held sway in a dread kingdom peopled by elementals fashioned in the form of dismembered parts of men and beasts. Then came the Nine Yen Wang or Serpent-men, who bore the faces of men and the bodies of serpents, and who divided the world into nine equal portions for each of the brothers. Then only did man become the ruler of earth and the messenger of Heaven.

But man was not created alone—with him were born also darkness and light; night and day; heaven and earth; the elements, the seasons, and the endless legions of Nature, terrestrial and celestial spirits. And from this incalculable myriad of beings, the Chinese men of immortal yesterdays, formulated a hierarchy, with Heaven as its pinnacle, to which they turned in reverent worship and devotion. Perceiving the eternal duality of all things—the inevitable succession of day and night; of earth and heaven; of man and woman—they set down the law of the inexorable dual principle of *Yin* and *Yang*, the ebb and flow, the passive and active, the negative and the positive, the masculine and feminine eternalized. Then, too, they divided the elements into earth, metal, water, wood and fire and identified them with man's physical organs. Next they turned to a minute classification of the entities to whom man must turn in contrition—entities of Heaven, earth, and humans of yesterday. In this intricate Hierarchy the spirit of Heaven held first place as the

Supreme Ruler. Others of importance were the spirits of heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon, the Great Bear; the spirits of the elements, of seasons; the tutelary protectors and deities of the Empire and, beneath them, of provinces and cities; the spirit rulers of mountains and rivers, of soil and animals. Nor were the spirits of heroic men forgotten—in solemn ranks came the spirits of patrons of civilization, of agriculture, of inventions—the great Fu Hsi and Shen Nung; sages and statesmen and sovereigns, in a complex succession in which precedence was carefully established and ranks meticulously maintained. It might even be that the spirits of emperors could outrank the sun and moon and frequently changes were made possible by the word of the Emperor of China, who, as the worldly representative of Heaven itself, might demote and promote these spirits, guided by those communions with Heaven which came to him by means of special Divinations.

No state has ever interwoven religion and government more intimately than has China, where worship was patriarchal and where the Emperor also assumed the mantle of High Priest with the onerous and mighty responsibility of conciliating the major spirits and gaining their propitious help for his entire people. In the person of the Emperor—Son of Heaven as he was—was embodied the rôle of the first worshipper, who personally was empowered to perform the great sacrifices to the Highest Entities in the series of ceremonies minutely outlined in the liturgical and classic writings. Besides these major sacrifices there were lesser sacrifices which could be executed by the

delegates and officers of the Emperor. Nor was each man deprived of the possibility of turning to the spirits—within each household stood the tablets of the ancestors, whose spirits jealously watch and wait the attention due to them. Hence the head of the household was also the priest in the ancestral rites, which allotted to each clan its own peculiar spirits to be appeased and regaled.

So long, then, as the Emperor—Son of Heaven—was a filial son, it was his privilege to remain at the head of his people and to perform the Great Sacrifices, chief among which were the High Sacrifices to Heaven at the summer and winter solstices. Magnificence attended these exalted days of worship when the Emperor, surrounded by his colorful retinue, journeyed to the environs of his capital to perform the devout conciliatory tribute to Heaven. Along paths lined with torches, he would travel to the altar specially erected in the open fields, where it stood in full sight of the Heaven and its outpouring warmth. Upon the altar lay the red bull calf, which the "Book of Rites" prescribed as the sacrificial offering to Heaven, in token of its gifts as the inexhaustible source of men's nurture. Pronouncing the solemn words, the Emperor raised a knife decorated with bells, and to the sound of their ringing, killed the offering and set afire the pyre. And flames and smoke leaped up in solemn manifestation to the great Heavens.

Thus does the *Li Ki*, the "Book of Rites," of China, describe the duty of the Son of Heaven upon this solemn festival day: "The Son of Heaven in his tours to the four quarters of the Kingdom first reared the pile of

wood. . . . At the great border sacrifice he welcomed the arrival of the longest day. It was a great act of thanksgiving to Heaven and the Sun was the chief object considered in it. The space marked off for it was in the southern suburb, the place most open to brightness and warmth. The Sacrifice was offered on the ground which had been swept for the purpose—to mark the simplicity of the ceremony. The vessels used were of earthenware and of gourds—as emblems of the natural productive power of heaven and earth. The place was the suburbs and hence the sacrifice was called the suburban or border sacrifice. The victim was red, because that was the color preferred by the Kau dynasty. And it was a calf to show the estimation of simple sincerity. . . . On the day of the sacrifice the king in his skin cap waits for the news that all is ready—showing the people how they ought to venerate their superiors. Those in mourning rites do not wail or put on mourning dress. The people water and sweep the road and turn it up fresh with the spade; at the fields in the neighborhood, they keep the torches burning. . . . On that day the king wears his robe with the ascending dragon as the emblem of heaven. He wears a cap with pendants of jade pearls up to twelve which is the number of heaven. He rides in a plain carriage because of its simplicity. From the flag hang twelve pendants and on it the emblazonry of dragons, and the figures of the sun and moon, in imitation of Heaven. Heaven hangs out its brilliant figures and the sage imitated them. The Border sacrifice was the illustration of the way of heaven.”

But it was to Earth that the Emperor offered his tribute

in the autumn, after the soil had yielded its harvests. Then, in solemn thanksgiving, in the northern suburb of the capital, the sacrificial offering—this time a tawny bull—was buried, that it might reach earth as a direct gift. In the hearts of his people, there must have resounded a hymn of thanksgiving, such as appears in the classic "Book of Odes," when women and children rejoiced that the hundred granaries were filled with the precious store.

And having seen the noble example of their Emperor, the people would turn to the altars within their own dwellings. The father of the family assumed his rôle as priest. One in each family would then be assigned to symbolize the spirit of the founder of their family line and receive in solemn silence the tributes of food and prayer which were the mark of their devotion.

And as the departed ancestors watched with eagle eye, the actions of their posterity—lest they neglect their duty to their forbears—so too, did Heaven mark the actions of the Emperor, her son. Heaven found no virtue in a ruler who failed to father his people, and refused thereby to obey the commands of Heaven. Thus does a wiseman of three millenniums ago warn his Emperor: "Be calm your Majesty. Heaven looks down on those below and grants them years according to their compliance with the Immutable Laws. It is not Heaven which cuts off man's years prematurely, but man himself who, rejecting virtue, withers his own destiny."

To learn the commands of Heaven, the Emperor turned to the Divinations which were believed to grant him direct communion with the Celestial wishes. The sys-

tems of Divination of ancient China were found in the mysterious Yi-Ching, the "Book of Changes," which by the arrangement of its Trigrams gave forth its auguries. Sometimes the divinations were made with stalks of the yarrow plant, or by the shell of a tortoise cracking under the heat, and disclosing the necessary pattern of the future. To these communications of the Godhead, the Emperors turned for guidance—and those who failed to obey this guidance and forgot their duty to the arch-Hierarch suffered an ignominious end.

As true sons of Heaven, the first Hero-Emperors gave resplendent examples to those who should come after them. First came the great Emperor Fu Hsi, who set down the cornerstones of Chinese culture—and bequeathed to the Chinese people six great gifts. First of these was the gift of Marriage as an institution. Second, he brought to men the discovery of musical instruments; music is inextricably interwoven in the religious life of China and hence this gift is deeply revered. Next he set down the great Trigrams in the Yi-Ching. These eight diagrams of three lines each, in their sixty-four arrangements, constituted the language of the divine auguries. Fu Hsi also invented writing and taught men the use of the six domestic animals—the horse, the sheep, the dog, the fowl, the ox and the pig. Finally he taught men the use of the mulberry leaf to feed the silkworm. After Fu Hsi came the Emperor Shen-Nung, called the divine husbandman, who is accredited with the discovery of agriculture.

No less revered are Yao the Great, in whom the Dragon

kingdom reached one of its supernal heights, and Shun his successor, who together are counted the traditional founders of the Empire. Heaven, in those happy days of yore, sanctified the throne of the Emperor and showered its beneficence on his people. For it was Heaven itself that inspired the Emperor Shun to renounce his unworthy son and to designate for his successor, his great Chief Minister Yu, whose consecration to duty has come down the annals of China as the example of the perfect servant to his country. After the great flood had inundated most of China, the task of draining the lands and restoring them for use was assigned to Yu. For eight years, with unprecedented zeal, he toiled at this task. And it is related that during this entire time, harried by the need of saving his people, he never returned to his home, but continued to labor incessantly. Thrice he is said to have passed the very portal of his home, yet refrained from entering the threshold, denying himself the beckoning welcome of its comfort until he had fulfilled the will of Heaven and the Emperor. And to this unyielding spirit, the mantle of Emperorship was given and he became the founder of a new dynasty—the Hia dynasty.

In these early centuries of Chinese history also appeared the two transcendant figures—liberators of China, Wen and Wu, instruments of heaven in the unthroning of the tyrant Chou Hsin. When Chou Hsin smote heavily the people of China, it was the Duke of Chou (Wen Wang) whose wisdom freed his fellow men, leaving his son to become the first of the Chou line. Great monarchs these, in whom Confucius himself saw the apotheosis of

the Kingly state, and whose just reigns are regarded as the Golden Age of the Empire.

But after these happy days, the perversity of men again prevailed, and from its Golden Age, China declined, and rulers themselves forgot the prerogatives of Heaven. By the sixth century before Christ, when the Chou Dynasty—so luminously begun—was spending itself, disintegration had set in, threatening the very rule of the Emperor. Feudal princes, inspired by greed, were warring on each other and usurping each other's possessions, in contradiction to the feudal codes of antiquity. Corruption was rife, and massacres and bloodshed occurred throughout the land. In the Province of Lu, destined to be the birthplace of the master Confucius, the reigning duke was harassed by continuous dissensions, and lesser members of his house threatened to usurp this royal power. Even his ministers were rebelling and Yan Huo, the most vicious of them, completely dominated the ruler and even for a while imprisoned him.

### CONFUCIUS

It was into this China—depleted, threatened with disintegration, with its ruling house already dying—that the two dominant spirits in the faith of China, Lao Tze and Kung Fu Tze, were born. Of the former, it may be said that he outlined one of the most humanitarian doctrines in all history; and of the latter, known to the West by his Latinized name, Confucius, that he is undoubtedly the most preponderant single figure in the life of any nation since time immemorial.



So long as China exists, there will brood over her being this Protector of her soul and spirit—the Master Kung, born in the Province of Lu in 551 B.C. Since the spirits of departed ancestors bear so solemn an implication in the existence of the Chinese and are believed so intimately to throng in and out of the lives of men, it is good to know that the invisible company of those which stood around the cradle of Confucius was an auspicious one. Tradition relates that no more illustrious line exists in China than the family of Kung, which can trace its roots back eighteen centuries, to its prehistoric founder Hwang-Ti. In the days of the grandfather of Confucius, political feuds forced the family to leave their homes and settle in Lu. And it was there that the father of Confucius, Shu-liang-Hih, was born.

Shu-liang-Hih himself won renown as a man of great bravery and singular strength. During the siege of Pih-yang, in 562 B.C., in which he was an officer, a group of his men were about to be entrapped by a dropping portcullis. By a prodigious feat of strength, he caught the dropping gate and raised it, enabling all to escape. Notwithstanding the many graces which apparently destiny had given him, they withheld their greatest favor—a son, who might carry on his line, although he had nine daughters. He was a man of 70 years when he sought the head of the illustrious house of Yen and asked him for the hand of one of his three daughters, lest he be spared the ignominy of an heirless line. For no greater misery can come to a Chinese than to die without a son, who may render his devout worship to a man's departed spirit. Yen

transmitted the matter to his daughters, of whom the eldest two seem to have demurred against marrying so aged a man. The youngest, who remains one of the examples of filial obedience in China, turned to her Father and said, "Merely designate your wish, Father." Thereupon Yen gave his youngest daughter to the warrior. Feeling her grave responsibility of bearing a son to the aging warrior, Chiangste journeyed to Mount Ni and at this sacred site prayed the grace of a son from Heaven. It is said that even the leaves of the trees made obeisance to her as she descended the mountain, presaging the fulfillment of her prayer.

Nor were the most sacred signs lacking at the birth of Chiangste's illustrious son, who is said to have been born in a cave on this very Mountain. As he was born, two dragons are believed to have appeared in the heavens, together with five sages—most singular auguries. Music was wafted to his mother from space during her labors. Upon the body of her son were forty-nine marks, signifying his unique destiny—and his head was shaped like Mount Ni. But the most awe-inspiring sign at his birth was the appearance of the Chi-lin, the ancient unicorn, that legendary beast of happy prophecy who brought to Chiangste a tablet on which were inscribed the words, "Thy son shall be the throneless king of China." Taking a bit of silk, she tied it about the horn of the unicorn, and he disappeared—to reappear again in the last years of Confucius' life, in a final augury.

When Confucius was three, his father died, happy at least in the thought of a son to survive him and to do

filial honor to his patriarchal spirit. At the age of seven the boy began his first schooling and it is said that knowledge came to him, much as it came to Saint Sergius, not by study alone but by some deep intuition, by a grace of heaven. His passion for knowledge absorbed him, and by the time he was fifteen he had become an assistant teacher. At seventeen, apparently in some financial stress, he sought employment so as to help in the support of his mother. He obtained a post in the Imperial Grain Stores where he is said to have been in charge of the accounting of the tithes which were paid in grain to the Emperor. Report has it that he was an extraordinary worker even then. At nineteen, he married the daughter of the noble family of Sung who gave him one son and, it is said, two daughters. By the time his son was born, Confucius was already known to the ruling house of Lu, for the Prince of the Province sent him the symbolic gift of a carp, whereupon the sage, deeply aware of the fitness of things, named his son in honor of the gift. Thenceforth we have but occasional glimpses of his family in the subsequent life of Confucius.

Tragedy visited Confucius at the age of twenty-four with the death of his mother—and in accordance with the profound significance attached to the mourning for the dead, Confucius retired from his public life and consecrated himself for three years to deep mourning. Emerging from this retirement, which seems to have afforded him a necessary interval for profound inner meditation, Confucius turned to teaching and began his life work, which he preferred to call that of an interpreter, a reviver

from the incidents of his journey, yet awaiting above all, for the subsidence of unrest, in order to begin that active ministry which he hoped for and regarded as his heaven-endowed mission.

Finally in 501 B.C., when Confucius had passed the half-century mark, the opportunity came to him. Yan Huo, who for a time had completely usurped the prerogatives of the Duke of Lu, was overthrown and forced to take flight. Temporary order was restored to the province, and Confucius returned—to be almost immediately offered the post of Governor of Lu.

The moment for which the Sage had dreamt was come. At once he set about instituting his fundamental principles of political economy and government—that of a highly centralized administrative power in which there was no place for venality and abuse. He believed in a monarchy with a responsible ruler, whose initial concern was the greatest welfare of the people. Apparently a phenomenal success was his almost at once, because he was promoted to the post of Minister of Interior and finally, to be the Prime Minister. But the actual period allowed him to display his really brilliant political theories was pitifully short—but a few months. And these months were intercepted by intrigue from within and without the province. The officials who had waxed prosperous in the days of Lu's undoing, resented this new reform which stripped them of their gains—and beyond the Province, the Prince of Chi looked with growing concern on the restoration of order in the neighboring state and foresaw his own ruthless well-being threatened.

Hoping to influence the ruler of Lu against his prime minister, the Prince of Chi invited the Prince to a conference. Confucius suspecting intrigue, accompanied his sovereign, in place of another official. During the meeting an armed force, recruited by Chi from his border regions, entered the conference and attempted to seize the Prince of Lu. But their efforts were frustrated by Confucius. Then, taking advantage of this breach of inviolability of such a conference, Confucius arose and before all who were assembled, publicly reprimanded Chi for the barbarous actions of his people, as a "heresy against God, a breach of virtue and an indignity against men." By these brilliant adverse tactics, Confucius not only won an apology from Chi but, to guarantee his good-faith, demanded the restoration of the former conquests taken by Chi from Lu. Defeated in his plan and in a helpless position, Chi accepted the conditions.

Alas—the brilliant victory of the Sage had been gained for an unworthy chief.

That which force had failed to accomplish, insidious intrigue and wily cunning fulfilled. The Prince of Chi not only restored the territories of Lu, but with astute subtlety, added to these a unique gift to its Prince—eighty dance maidens and one hundred superb horses. Before this temptation, the Prince of Lu succumbed completely—and Confucius beheld the frustration of all his endeavors. His sovereign entirely neglected his government and his court; and the Sage, seeing the ruler commit himself to the lusts and pleasures which he condemned in others, resigned his post. Reluctance marked Confucius' resigna-

tion and in his heart he hoped that Lu would feel some remorse and that he would be recalled and enabled to continue the plans that were so dear to him. But his hope was futile—no call came, and Confucius once again set out upon his wanderings as a voluntary exile, surrounded by his disciples.

In a manner this pilgrimage is repeated in some variation in the life of every great Teacher: It is the same tragic drama of perceiving clearly all the limitations of their contemporaries, all their venality, their ingratitude—yet forced by an inner urge which knows no stilling, to sound the note of hope in the good life, the note of conviction in an eternal verity which must ultimately defeat the perversions of men, even against themselves. The records of the travels of Confucius are replete with evidences of moments when this poignant and bitter cup was his. Despite his yearning to transmute his knowledge into the economic and political well-being of his fellow-men and in the face of his disappointment, he could gracefully reply to his less-patient pupils with the serenity of the illumined soul. When one of his disciples resentfully asked why he was not in public office, the Sage calmly answered: "You remember that the Book defines a good son as being ever-dutiful, and a friend of his brothers—thus, giving the example of good rule. This, too, is to rule. What need, then, is there of office?"

Or again, to another disciple, "One should not concern oneself with the lack of office—but with one's fitness to fulfill it. One should not sorrow at not being recognized, but at his unworthiness of recognition."



CONFUCIUS, THE JUST ONE  
From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich





And so, for thirteen years, this singular processional of the Sage continued—on foot or in his tiny cart with his pupils about him. Outwardly he could see frustration, humiliation, vicissitude, even threatened starvation. Inwardly—still the inexorable faith in the law of heaven, and in the eventual victory of ethics. “Must the superior man also suffer starvation?” was the bitter outcry even of Tze Lu, one of the closest of his pupils. “Yes, the superior man will endure it unmoved, only the common man breaks out into excesses,” was the reproof of his Master.

And even when attacked by assassins during his journey, he could still say, “What have I to fear—heaven has given me my mission.”

Certainly the “superior man” whom Confucius held up to his pupils as their eventual goal, was epitomized in Confucius himself—because the great Teachers, whose words challenge time because they are eternal, may be recognized by this inner realization of the inexorable necessity of their mission. Neither derision, persecution nor even the way of the Cross, can for an instantaneous moment dull the fire which possesses them and drives them to the complete quaffing of the cup.

Finally when he was sixty-eight, Confucius was invited to return to his native province. By then a new monarch of Lu had come into power, and one of the pupils of Confucius, Jan Yu, was in his service. Through his influence the Sage was invited to return, but even then he was given only an honorary post. For the next five years until his death, the Sage devoted himself to his pupils and to

setting down the great literary heritage that he left for China—those classics which constitute the Law of Life, the inexhaustible fountain of recourse to all Chinese. For Confucius himself, the writing of these Books was in effect a refuge. One may even discern in it a surrender to the realization that the great ambition of his life would not be fulfilled. Never had he resigned the hope that he could emerge from the rôle of being the propounder of the spoken and written word, to his rôle of a great legislator and administrator—for like Plato, who dreamed of the perfect Republic, Confucius envisioned the ideal kingdom where men live the good life. At no time up to his sixty-eighth year did he resign the hope that the beauty of his doctrine of ethics might be impressed forever into the consciousness of China by the actual example of a perfect state. For his was no rôle of theorist—he wanted to reveal the validity of his doctrine of ethics and his ideals of government and economics, by setting up a government which would survive in history, as had the rule of Weng and Wu, as the perfect synthesis of equity and justice, hence happiness. He always perceived his heaven-sent mission to be, not merely that of preacher, but legislator and administrator; the harbinger of a New Era for his unhappy compatriots.

Years passed—and the dream became more elusive. Contemporary rulers honored him—but warily held on to their thrones. They found no comfort in listening to his warnings against corruption and injustice; the praises of Weng and Wu were not easy for them to assimilate, when they recalled that Weng and Wu had gained their

kingdom by ousting a tyrant. The perfect courtesy of the Messenger Confucius did not hide the inexorable warning of his message. And thus—at his sixty-eighth year, Confucius, feeling his years numbered, understood that this great ideal and hope of his life were receding forever into space.

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Perhaps the joys of his literary labors, rising from the amazing achievement which he performed in writing the Classics, permitted him to forget the frustration which had forced him to turn to them. Because the love of learning and knowledge always clothed him like a luminous garment; and the extraordinary quality of these great Books irradiate an amazing zest and joy. During these five years he inscribed the Ching, six works, of which only one was an original book, and the others his compilations and editions of the heritage of China's past. First of his works was the "Book of Odes," the Shih Ching, his magnificent contribution to Poetry, with which he shared his passion for music. To our modern mind, it will seem incredible that one who not only was the greatest philosophic influence of his people, but perhaps his country's greatest political economist and legislator, could have felt that Poetry was his first responsibility. But not so with the ancients. Poetry was an essential equipment of all cultivated men—and especially of public men and legislators. No public man could be without this accomplishment. And, who knows what healthful purgings might take place in our modern governments on such a basis! In any case, China set tremendous importance on

poetry and the songs of the people—because thus the rulers gauged the condition of the nation. During the Chou dynasty the Emperor himself toured his entire kingdom each five years and ordered the official music masters to set before him the most popular songs of each province. As is stated in the "Book of Rites," "Each five years the Son of Heaven makes a progress through the kingdom and the Grand Music Master is commanded to lay before him the poems of the different states." These poems were carefully studied, for, through them, in lieu of a public press, the condition and welfare of each province were estimated. The wise rulers of early China understood that which some nations have not learned in millenniums; though one may sometimes stifle a press, one may not continuously stifle the folk and there will eventually burst forth such a "Marseillaise" as will reach high heaven and break down prison doors. And thus, the Sons of Heaven marched through their kingdom feeling the pulse of the people.

Nor was this the sole function of Poetry—it constituted an essential part of every religious and governmental ceremony. No reception to a great man or diplomat was complete unless the most celebrated poems of the day were recited aloud to him, and special poems were written to do him honor. The correctly equipped diplomat had to reply in Poetry—thus one of the essential equipments of diplomats and emissaries was the knowledge of poetry. As Confucius informs us in the "Analects," "A man may be expected to act well in any governmental service after

he has mastered 300 odes." Poetry was an overtone of all ancient Chinese life.

In the course of the Imperial tours, a collection of 3,000 odes had been gathered of which Confucius chose about 310. These are highly diverse, covering not only the tributes to Heaven, or to the Great Emperors of the Past—but also exquisite love poems, devotions to the fragrance of nature which China understood with unexcelled subtlety.

Thus for instance does one of the Odes commemorate the Autumn's sacrifice to Earth:

"They sow the many kinds of grain. Each seed carries within it a germ of life.

There are those who come to sow them; with their baskets round and square containing the provisions of millet,

With their light splint hats on their heads, they ply their hoes upon the ground clearing away the smartweed on the dry land and wet.

The weeds, being decayed, the millets grow luxuriantly

They fall, rustling, before the reapers. The gathered crop is piled up solidly, High as a wall, united together like the teeth of a comb.

And the hundred houses open to receive them.

Those hundred houses being full, the women and children have a feeling of repose.

And now we kill the black-muzzled tawny bull, with his crooked horns. To imitate and hand down, to hand down the observances of our ancestors."

Or another simple dedication called "The Good Tree,"

" 'Tis a noble spreading tree,  
Far and wide extend its shoots,  
Covered thick with clustered fruits.  
Such is he;  
He, the man we celebrate,  
Peerless, generous and great."

And thus, because Poetry to him was the reflection of the Heart of China—the harmonics of Chinese life, the great master Kung set down the folk spirit in his great Book of Odes.

From Poetry, Confucius turned to inscribe the Shu Ching or "Book of Records"—in which he rescued from the oblivion of the past the records of the Empire beginning with Yao the Great and coming down to a period about a half century before his own time. His apparent effort was to set forth the examples of proper government through the ages under the Emperors—and for Confucius the best governmental form was a definite Hierarchy, a single head—but that head a Sage. The "Book of Records" meticulously records the revolutions against emperors who betrayed the trust of Heaven and the faith of the people. For, with the fearless certainty of the Hebraic prophets, Confucius did honor to the just ruler but brought the warning of Heaven to the unjust. Yes—Emperor by the grace of Heaven—but Heaven itself acted to cast out the profligates.

The "Book of Records" stands today as one of the most perfect examples of Chinese classic literature and has stood as the great Catechism, if you will, of all Chinese Emperors since its writing, for the princes were tutored from its pages: it was a veritable breviary mirroring the grandeur of virtue and the inevitable wages of injustice. Kiang Kang-Hsu, a modern Chinese scholar, points out one highly significant fact in the "Book of Rites," revealing the prophetic vision of the great Sage. Overlooking many Provinces, then dominant in the Empire, Confucius

chose for apparently no reason, to include in it the Oath of Chin, then a barbarous and insignificant province; only 300 years after his day did this Province emerge from ignominy to its dominant place in the Empire. In this work, Confucius brought history to be his witness to the pronouncements of ethics and justice which he proclaimed throughout his life.

The synthesis of the Confucian spirit is never more engagingly set forth than in the "Book of Rites," the third of the Classics. From the awesome details of heavenly sacrifice by the Emperors, up to the most delightful minutiae of daily life, this book is an engaging compendium. Herein all men, from Emperor down, could find the rules of deportment, of religion, of government, even of personal hygiene by which to guide themselves. It furnished a never-failing guide for life and conduct, and prescribed not only the form of Government but the days of bathing and the correct conduct of daughters-in-law. Thus, for instance it is the "Book of Rites" that prescribed the divisions of the government. Under the Emperor were to be a cabinet composed of the Minister of Heaven, of Earth, of Spring, of Summer, of Autumn and Winter. Under these lyric names, were implied respectively, the Ministry of State and Interior; the Ministry of Agriculture, Transportation and Finance; the Ministry of Education and Public Ceremony; the Ministry of War; the Ministry of Law; and the Ministry of Industry and Labor. Each Minister was accorded two vice-ministers or under-secretaries. The variation of their duties with those of our own cabinet members would prove a diverting

study. Thus under the Confucian code, it would be the duty of our Secretary Ickes, if you will, to take charge of all religious, funeral, social, military and wedding rites and to see that the sacrifices to Heaven and those to the spirits of nature and past emperors were properly discharged.

The "Book of Rites" has left few problems of deportment—whether of public men or the simplest of individuals—to chance. Such admonitions as the following might protect our contemporary public men even at press conferences: "The Son of Heaven does not look at a person above his collar or below his girdle. The ruler of a state looks at him a little below the collar. A great officer, on a line with the heart. And an ordinary officer not from beyond a distance of five paces. In all cases, looks directed to the face denote pride, and below the girdle, grief; if directed askance, they denote villainy."

In the delightful section of the Li Ki called the Yueh Ling—which might be termed, "The Government, month by month"—is given the program of affairs, following a gamut as wide as the expected state of the sun and moon and weather, the costumes of the Emperor, the duties of the farmers, to the education of the nation, even to their music lessons; thus, we read "during this month, orders are given to the chief director of music to enter the college and practice the dances with the pupils."

False pride and the avid search for family trees, where there were none, was not a virtue with the ancient Chinese, for the Rites inform us that a "Superior man when left an orphan will not change his name. Nor will he, in



such cases, if suddenly become noble, frame an honorary title for his father." The persistent caller was taught his lesson thus: "When one is sitting in attendance on another of superior character and the other yawns or stretches himself or lays hold of his staff or shoes, or looks toward the sun to see if it be early or late, he should be asked to be allowed to leave."

What the Press columnists of today do for good manners, the Li Ki did for ancient China. What better directions could be offered to the neophyte in society: "Do not try to gulp down soup with vegetables in it, nor add condiments in it. Do not keep picking the teeth, nor swill down the sauces. If a guest adds condiments the host will apologize for not having the soup prepared better. If he swill down the sauces, the host will apologize for his poverty in that the sauce was not sufficiently strong."

The rules of love, of marriage, the conduct of relatives are prescribed—thus "no daughter-in-law may venture to withdraw from the presence of her parents until told." Cooking recipes from meat balls, to delicious frys and other delicacies here abound—in other words the Li Ki is an apotheosis of all Books of Etiquette, indicating that 2,500 years before our day, China concerned itself over the niceties of polite society. And were it the custom, in our day as in ancient China, to bring solemn reverence to the spirit of the past, one might recommend that all columnists, feature writers and specialists of contemporary journalism, repair to a Tablet of the Li Ki. And before this Monument, to bow three times, in reverence to the Arch-prototype of all their literary endeavors.

For a revelation into the life of ancient China, the "Book of Rites" is unequalled; for the rule of propriety, by which Confucius sought to commend that self-discipline which all Teachers have pronounced in different terms, is herein set forth. The ebullient character of the book would reveal that it furnished a happy interlude in the literary labors of Confucius, who was the most courteous man of China and graced all his daily acts with beauty.

The "Book of Changes"—the Yi Ching—was his next task—but one could not find a greater contrast than this to his preceding work. In the course of the Centuries, as we turn from civilization to civilization, we realize that humanity has lost many keys to its most mysterious possessions. Behind locked doors, which await the Finder of the Keys, are gathered infinite treasures. Such is the Yi Ching in which is set down the Eight Trigrams, said to have been invented by Fu Hsi the first sage of earth. The diagrams are made of three lines, one above the other, either continuous or divided in the middle. Into the arrangement and variation of these Trigrams, a great mystical meaning was attached and upon them sacred divinations were computed. The eight original Trigrams represented Heaven; Water; Fire, Thunder; Wind and Wood; Rain and Moon; Hill and Mountain; and Earth. By the juxtaposition of these Trigrams the amazing auguries of the future were said to be revealed and the word of Heaven communicated. Chinese tell many stories of the revelations furnished by the flashing prophecies of the Trigrams. But all these are only glimpses—for the

key is to be found only by the Quester. Confucius himself, in his last years, referred to this Book with awe as offering perhaps the secret of life's mystery, for in working over the Yi, he exclaimed: "If I could but count on additional years to my life! I would now give fifty years to the study of the Yi alone, for then I could escape all the errors of my life." Nor was Confucius alone in this conviction of the great implications which lay in the Yi Ching and the compilation of the mystic figures. Weng and Wu—the beloved Emperors and saviours of China a millennium before—had sought its pages in utter reverence. In the days of their persecution and imprisonment, before they escaped to unthrone the tyrant king, Weng and Wu turned to an analysis of the Yi Ching, and it is this analysis which Confucius has left among the Classics. And it is this analysis which students believe comprises an outline of cosmology and evolution which will yield its secret to the Quester of truth, and like the apocalyptic utterances of all scriptures challenge the future. Thus, for instance, did Weng analyze the Hexagram of Heaven, Chien, comprising the six unbroken parallel lines set one about the other:

1. In the first or lowest line undivided we see the subject as the dragon lying hid in the deep. It is not time for active doing.
2. In the second line undivided, we see its subject as the dragon appearing in the field. It will be advantageous to meet with the great man.
3. In the third line undivided, we see its subject as the dragon (superior man) active and vigilant all day and in the evening still careful and apprehensive. The position is dangerous but there will be no mistake.

4. In the fourth line undivided we see the subject as the dragon looking as if he were leaping up but still in the deep. There will be no mistake.
5. In the fifth line undivided we see its subject as the dragon on the wing in the sky. It will be advantageous to meet with the great man.
6. In the sixth line undivided, we see its subject as the dragon exceeding the proper limits. There will be occasion for repentance.
7. The lines of the hexagram are all strong and undivided as appears from the use of the number 9. If the host of dragons thus appearing were to divest themselves of their head there would be good fortune.

It is not difficult to believe that in the intriguing mystery of these variable diagrams which provided such grounds for speculation, men saw a possible revelation into the unknown.

The "Book of Music," the original Fifth Classic, has remained to us only in small part, having suffered the fate of some of the world's great writings. It was destroyed some centuries after the Sage's death, in the zeal to destroy the Confucian Classics. Yet there is no doubt that to this work on music, Confucius must have brought much of his supreme consecration, because music was a passion of his life. As he described it, "Music was joy without excess, sorrow without harm, the murmur of restlessness without strife." The passages of this Book that remain have been included in the "Book of Rites" and some of its amazing excerpts provide us with the clue of universality which Confucius, like Pythagoras, perceived in the language of music.

Finally, came the one work of which Confucius ad-

mitted authorship, "Spring and Autumn," which was a record of the Chou dynasty that was living through its death throes in the days of Confucius. Herein the Sage took opportunity to include most of his political doctrines, to point out his beliefs in the true economy of Ethics, as a governmental practice. To these ideas we will turn later at greater length. Here one may mention that the original Classics of Confucius were later enlarged by four additional works—the "Analects," which like the Gospels of the New Testament, are the remembered discourses of the Master set down by his disciples with loving attention to the Master's characteristic words. The "Sayings of Mencius"—by Mencius, the Saint Paul of Confucianism, who came a century after the Sage—constitutes another of these works and the last two are the "Book of Great Learning" and the "Doctrine of the Mean," later apocryphal writings.

There is no doubt, that even as he wrote these exalted works, Confucius was filled with the sense of his impending death, and in this spirit was moved to set down finally his heritage to posterity. But these final years were made even more poignant by numerous misfortunes. Following the death of his son, he lost another son perhaps still more dear to him—his most beloved disciple, Yen Yuan, whose death bereft him of the one follower in whom he had centered his greatest hopes for the transmission of his doctrines. "He it was who loved learning. He never vented anger on an innocent man and I never knew him to make the same error twice. Now I see no one who has his ardor for learning around me," exclaimed the master

on hearing of Yen Yuan's death—and his grief was great.

Only occasionally, in these final years of his life, did some poignant utterance come from his mellow spirit: "The phoenix comes not, nor does the river give forth its sign. All is over with me." And sometimes he informed his pupils that he no longer dreamt of the great Wen Wang, and in this perceived an augury of the closeness of the end.

Two years before his death, an episode occurred in which Confucius read the inexorable prophecy of his passing. An official hunt had taken place, and during this event a most unusual beast was captured and killed. None had ever seen its like, although on its horn clung a bit of silk! Finally, news of this killing reached the Sage. Hearing the tale, he sighed deeply and with a sense of inner contemplating said, "It is the Chi-lin, the unicorn." It was as though some long-expected happening had taken place. Thenceforth, Confucius with great deliberation hastened to complete his final work, "Spring and Autumn"—and, as its final lines, he set the poem inspired by the news of the self-immolation of the Chi-lin, the gentle beast of ancient augury:

"In the reigns of Tang and Yu  
Chi-lin and phoenix brought their greetings  
But, alas, our days no longer are worthy.  
Why did you come, only to die,  
Chi-lin, Chi-lin?  
From my heart, I pity you."

And once, as his time came closer, he turned to his pupils and proclaimed to them:

"The great mountain must crumble  
The strong beam must break  
The wise man must wither away like a plant."

Then one day, calling to him his disciple Tze Kung, he gave him the following instructions: "Under the Hsia Emperors, the body was dressed and coffined at the top of the steps towards the east, for it is there that the deceased would ascend. The people of Yin performed the same ceremony between the two pillars so that the steps for the host were on the side of the corpse and those for the guest on the other. The people of Kan performed it at the top of the western steps, treating the deceased as though he were a guest. I am a man of Yin—and last night I dreamt that I was seated with the offering to the dead by my side between the two pillars. No intelligent king seems to arise in the world; and who is there who would have me as his master? I feel I am about to die."

Thereupon he seemed overcome with illness, went to his bed and in seven days was dead . . . he, the Master Kung, whose triumph was still ahead.

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Voltaire has said of Confucius that no legislator was ever more useful to the human race. Certainly no teacher ever earned the phenomenal influence over a nation which came to this courtly individual, who, above all other forces, has been the catalysis of the Chinese spirit. In his person, beyond all other causes, may be discerned the reason for China's longevity. Truly, Chi-lin was right. He became the throneless king of China, and though

Emperors may be dethroned, the solemn reverence to a Confucius, a real Son of Heaven, remains an integral part of the chemistry of Chinese thought.

It was no thunderous revolutionary doctrine that Confucius propounded athwart the thought of his people—his doctrine may be summed up as that of a living ethical principle for men and nations. He perceived the ideal life as a tolerant and, above all, just relationship of human beings to each other as well as to the forces of nature and to the powers of Heaven. No stentorian exhortations are his pronouncements—he claimed no prophetic prerogatives or direct inspirations. His mission, he constantly asserted, was that of interpreter to lead men back to a re-statement of the ancient faith, that golden past of Weng and Wu, which to him was the symbol of the ethical life.

It is not strange to perceive why Confucius deliberately eschewed the rôle of innovator. His was an epoch of decadence when men of spirit looked back with a nostalgic longing to those happier days of yore in which men lived in harmony with one another—and above all, when their paternal protector, the Emperor, stood close to Heaven and ruled them out of the benignity of his heart. Hence Confucius counted it his responsibility to bring to his fellowmen a return to the Good Life.

It has been said that the doctrine of any great Teacher may be inscribed upon the palm of one's hand. And Confucius himself synthesized his entire teaching into a single word, when asked by his pupils to crystallize for them his belief into one canon which would cover all problems of life. "Is there one word, master, on which the whole



of life may be based?" asked his disciple. "Yes—reciprocity. Do not do unto others that which you yourself do not desire." Thus was restated by the wise man of China the Golden Rule, which in its infinite variations, has appeared in the doctrine of every great Teacher. But for Confucius, the word reciprocity had also in it something of tolerance and magnanimity.

In an examination of his writings and his discourses, as set forth by his students in the "Analects," one is stirred by the deep faith which possessed him to bring back that Golden Age, when men truly practiced reciprocity in all things and when a benign spirit permeated the relationships of human beings. Himself a compassionate and kindly man, he believed that the inner nature of all men was originally good and essentially ethical, and that only man himself frustrated the essential goodness of his nature by a perverse will. As he says, "By nature men are nearly alike, by practice they become wide apart." Hence all his life he sought to uphold a practice of life which would enable men to realize their basic unities. And for this he demanded self-discipline and each man's scrutiny of his own blemishes not those of others. "At sight of worth," he admonished his pupils, "think how to grow like it. At sight of evil—seek within yourself." . . . "Rank you labor above the prize—will not your minds be elevated? Fight your own sins not those of others and evil will be mended. Is not one moment of anger which forgets self and kin—is that not error?"

His concern was with life, with victory over self in an immediate world not in an after-life. And when his pupils

sought to entice him into a discussion of man's relations with the spirits or with another world, he reminded them that it was sufficiently hard to co-ordinate oneself with this life and to find a common basis of intercourse with humans, let alone with the dead. He did not deny immortality but he refused to permit his pupils to lure themselves into the intricacies of metaphysical hypotheses, when there was an entire world of ethical values still to be conquered.

Essentially he was a humanist and concerned with the problems of men not gods, for he found the paths to the gods through the ways of men. Among men, he differentiated three classes—highest among them, the sage, who seemed to him from birth to have all the essentials of perfection, and who needed no learning for knowledge was already inherent in him. In his lifetime, Confucius, according to a tradition, made reference only once to such a "mountain of a man"—the great Lao Tze, of whom we will later speak. But if a man was not born a sage, said the Teacher, he still might become a superior man through the practices of life. This superior man of the Confucian philosophy is no Nietzschean iconoclast, with his protesting thunderations. For Confucius, the superior man attained this much-desired consummation through a five-stemmed path: 1. Discrimination—by which the Sage meant a serious, solemn choosing of the path to ethical superiority. And having chosen the path, the next step was 2. Completion of his knowledge—by which thoroughness and consistency advanced him further along the way. The final three steps indicate the emphasis which Con-

fucius laid upon the sensitizing of the person, and its attainment of inner perspicacity, that gave life its balance and propriety, signs of the superior man, who was the disciplined yet gracious spirit. These three were: Verification of one's intentions and principles; rectification of the heart and, finally, the cultivation of the entire person. "To make oneself perfect little by little, by study and effort, is within human power and is the common Path." . . . "The best men are those born wise. The next are those who grow wise by learning. Then come those who grow wise by experience. But the lowest men are those who never learn by experience." So he discussed the divisions of humans with his disciples. "The superior man is consistent but not changeless, for only the wisest of the wise and the lowest of the low refuse to change."

One of the virtues which Confucius held especially imperative in the relations between men was sincerity—the sincere heart was an open sesame to the path of superiority. "He who is possessed of the most complete sincerity can give its full development to nature and with it to that of other men and other things." Five relationships in life were held up to his disciples as criteria which betokened the superior man—the relation of father to son; of brother to brother; of husband to wife; of ruler to subject (or superior to inferior); of friend to friend. In the beautification and mellowing of these relationships, he perceived an objective of life, which seemed more immediate to the needs of men than any concern with a hereafter. Against the virtues of benign relationships he set five major sins, ranking second only to theft and robbery

—these were malevolence; perverseness; untruth; vindictiveness and vacillation.

Thus, constantly, did Confucius pronounce to his pupils a personal standard of life which would clothe them eventually in the courtliness, the discipline, the modesty, yet the conviction which marked the superior individual.

But it was not the rôle of Confucius to propound only a personal philosophy. Parallel with his serious training of his pupils, he was sounding out his doctrines for the rules of the state. The happiness of human beings and their right to peaceful existence was his lifelong concern—and he realized that this would be unattainable without the foundations of a State which would consecrate itself to the well-being of its subjects. Justice, discipline and benignity were the marks of a good government as they were the marks of a superior man. And so, throughout his life, he protested against the period in which he lived, and pronounced forcefully his condemnations of the unprincipled rulers, if not by name, by examples which he drew from China's past. His active immersement into the affairs of his day won him the criticism of many of his philosophic contemporaries, especially Mot-zu, who preferred to withdraw themselves into the life-meditative in protest against the abhorrences and venalities about them. Not so Confucius—he would not be silent and retiring, against the affront of tyranny.

His forthrightness probably proved an unwelcome thorn in the sides of contemporary princes—and they discerned in his words a warning that the people could be goaded too far. "People may be made to follow, they can-

not be made to understand. A love of daring, enflamed by poverty, will lead to crime, just as a man without love, if deeply ill-treated will turn to assault"—so he warned his sovereigns, because even heaven might use the instrument of revolt when the ruler forgot his responsibilities to his subjects.

When the Duke of Lu asked his council as to what was the best way to make his people loyal, Confucius warned him, "If you exalt that which is honest and denounce the crooked, your people will be loyal. But if you exalt the corrupt and put aside the virtuous, your people will become disloyal."

One of his most brilliant utterances was his reply to the same Duke who questioned him for a single precept which might bless a kingdom. Confucius thought for a long time, then answered, "It is hard to find such a precept, yet I recall the proverb 'It is hard to be a king, and not easy to be a minister.' Do not you think that if the realization of this proverb came to the king, and he understood how truly hard it was to be a ruler, this saying would actually bless the entire nation?" Whereupon the Duke asked him the inevitable counter-question, as to what proverb might destroy a nation. Confucius regarded him penetratingly, and again replied, "I recall the saying 'My one joy as king is that none may withstand what I command.' If none withstand the king when he is right, all is well. But if none withstand the king when he is wrong, it may well wreck the kingdom."

The good of the greatest number, under the most economical rule, and with the king as the central, highly

responsible force of control, was a formula for good government which he often pronounced. Equable taxes which would neither endanger the king's rule, nor bring injustice to the people were essential—he believed that a system of tithes provided the best method of taxation. His astute economic sense permitted him to forevision a system of long-term planning, a balancing of supply and demand in products and a maintenance of prices—the balancing of nature with intelligence. "Nature predominating begets crudeness, intelligence predominating begets pedantry—intelligence and nature well blent," would provide for the balance, which in men or government was the highest desideratum.

He was fully convinced, however, that for a government to attempt to bring about the ideal state purely by law was disastrous and inevitably a failure. "The good government has to be unswervingly vigilant. To govern simply by statute and reduce all to order by means of pains and penalties is to render people evasive and devoid of shame. To govern them on principles of virtue and to reduce them to order by rules of propriety would not only create in them the sense of shame but teach them their errors."

It was the government's sacred task to look out for the welfare of every one of its subjects—from the child to the aged and afflicted, and in the formula of an ideal state, he sets up his concept of the functions of government, "When the great Tao is truly carried out, all under heaven will be democratic. Men of virtue will be honored, and those with ability elected. Sincerity and har-

mony will be exercised. Then, men will not only love their own parent and their own sons but also the parents and sons of others. The aged will be properly cared for. All adults will be employed. Children will be nursed and educated. And the sick, defective and homeless will be cared for at public expense. Every man will have his place of employment and every woman her home. No wealth will be allowed to be wasted or used for private gain. No labor will be allowed to be undeveloped or used for ulterior individual profit. In such circumstances, criminal efforts will find no way to exist; thieves and robbers and rebels will be unable to ply their vices—and the doors of men's homes need no longer be locked."

That Heaven would guard the destiny of humanity was one of the ideals to which Confucius was committed—for he believed in a moral supervision of earth and spoke of the commands of heaven as being inexorable—although he remained silent as to any personal god.

Of himself, Confucius spoke with utmost humility, and although he was convinced of his mission as a teacher and as a reviver of the ancient faith, he nevertheless mantled himself in a sincere modesty. "How dare I lay claim to holiness or love?" he asked his disciples. "A man with endless craving for knowledge, who never tires of teaching, I may be termed—nothing more. The neglect of what is good in me, and the want of thoroughness in learning; the failure to do right when pointed out to me, the lack of strength to overcome my faults—these are my sorrows." And again, "I am simply a man who in his eager pursuit of knowledge neglects his good and in the

joy of its attainment forgets his sorrow; and who, thus absorbed, does not see that old age is coming on."

Of all men of his epoch, none came closer to his own Superior Man, who "considers what is right, not what will pay and who ranks the effort above the prize." Following the words of that other Illumined Spirit, the Gautama Buddha, Confucius was one who prized the labor and not its fruits.

He himself summed up his entire life in one sentence—"at fifteen, I had the desire to learn; at thirty, I could stand up; at forty, I had no longer any doubts; at fifty, I understood the laws of Heaven; at sixty, my ears obeyed me; at seventy, I could do as my heart dictated and never swerve from right."

Throughout the entire life of Kung the Teacher, there is an organ note of graciousness—the Good Life reflected in discipline, in forbearance, in kindness and in justice—a harmony of works which shed benevolence upon the man and his image for the centuries to come.

Throughout history many men have been loved and respected, many have lived in the hearts of posterity—but to none has come the unique position which came to Confucius—that of being the very synthesis of a nation and to win its undiminished reverence for 2,500 years. Dynasties have come and gone; the Sons of Heaven have left the dragon throne—but the Sage, whose throne was humility, whose crown was wisdom, remains the object of veneration. In his lifetime, no ruler could be found to give him the privilege of a governmental post—but for



centuries since his death, Emperors paid retribution to his memory, ever fresh; and bowed low before his spirit.

But at his death, it was his disciples alone, who had wandered with him in his exile and who learned to reap the inexhaustible harvest of his learning, who mourned him. For three years they showed their inexpressible despair, knowing that China would never find his like again.

The amazing vitality of his teaching and his memory lived on—only once in the long centuries were commands uttered against his doctrines, when in 212 the Emperor, fearing the threat to his predominance in the memory of the Sage, ordered all his books burnt. But what imperial threat can destroy a folk devotion? The people of China secreted the books of Confucius, as they would have secreted their priceless treasures. And when a century later the Han rulers returned, eager to make restitution of the wrong before the spirit of the Great Sage, the books came out of their secret hiding places. Thenceforth, century upon century, emperor after emperor has sought to add new luster to the solemn memory of Confucius. The Hans decreed the annual sacrifice of a bullock before the Tablet of Confucius. Fifty years later a temple was erected to him at his home. In the Third Century, it was decreed that four times a year both a sheep and a bull were to be offered in his name, both at the Imperial altar and at the temple erected on the site of his home. In 555, temples in his memory were raised in every prefecture. Today his tomb is the holiest shrine of China and royal decree has elevated him to the same rank as Heaven and Earth.

Within each of the temples consecrated to him is placed a Tablet with the inscription, "To the Blessed Sometime Teacher Kung." At his side are the tablets of his four closest disciples and followers, among them Mencius, and above them the tablets of twelve sages who were so close to him, including the great Chi Hi, his later commentator.

For centuries, emperors remembering the Sage, set out the sacrificial vessels and the fruit offerings, as they pronounced:

"Great art thou, O Perfect Sage! Thy virtue is complete. Thy doctrine is all-encompassing. Among mortal men, there has never been your equal. All kings honor you. Thy statutes and laws have come down in glory. Thou art the pattern in this Imperial school. Reverently we set out the sacrificial vessels. Full of awe we sound the drums and bells. I, today, the Emperor, offer a sacrifice to the philosopher Kung, the Ancient Teacher, the perfect Sage, and say, 'O Teacher, in virtue equal to heaven and earth, whose doctrines embrace the past and the present, Thou didst digest and transmit the Six Classics and didst hand down the lessons for all generations'."

But even above the Tablets and temples to his name, even beyond the bullocks and sheep sacrificed before his altars, is the reverence brought him by every Chinese from the tiny school boy beginning his learning to the venerable sages of the nation. More than all other Chinese, he has become the common Ancestral Spirit of every Chinese. Because like Pan Ku, the first man whose labors created the earth, Confucius in a great mystic process has entered and become the very soul of China, and his heart

and spirit have become an inalienable part of the Chinese being.

### MENCIUS

The story of Christianity would be incomplete without the inclusion of the life of Paul of Tarsus. So, too, with the story of Confucianism—a clarion and superb note, germane to its theme, resounds a century after the death of Kung the Sage, in the life and teachings of Meng-tse, or Mencius, his follower. Before his death, Confucius had suffered the pain of seeing his most beloved disciple, Yen Yuan, die before him—Yen Yuan, on whom he had counted as the apostle of his teachings. One may but hope that, as he envisioned so much of the future, Confucius may have foreseen the birth of this true son of his spirit, Mencius, who held up to his day the reborn Image of Kung, and breathed reverent life into his words.

In the hundred years after the death of Confucius, the threatened unrest of the Empire had gained great momentum. The chaos which Confucius had sought vainly to arrest, not only by his teachings but by his example, had set in, and the young Mencius began life in a maggoty empire, in which seven princes were struggling ruthlessly for supremacy.

If we turn to Music—so beloved to Kung and Meng—for our purposes, one may say that the life of Mencius was a variation of the theme set forth in the life of Confucius. One never loses sight of the Confucian *motif*, save that Mencius always preferred a *forte* against Kung's

*moderato*; the succinct perfection of the Confucian epigram, was enlarged by Mencius with *cadenzas*, or transformed into a *scherzo*, or a finale *prestissimo*. Withal the slight variation of expression, the two spirits are twin, and Mencius by every factor save blood, is the true son of his father, Confucius. So felt Mencius himself, for losing his own father at an early age, his one wish in life was as he expressed it, "to become like Confucius—for never from the birth of mankind until now has there been another like Confucius."

The life of Mencius was not unlike that of his predecessor, save that perhaps he resigned himself earlier to the impossibility of enlightening the contemporary rulers, or modifying their determined venality.

Mencius was a member of the great Meng family, once wielding power and possessions but reduced to poor circumstances by the time of Meng's birth in 372 B.C. By that time the family of Mencius was living in a small state in Tsou, south of Lu and southwest of the present province of Shentang. Like Confucius, Mencius is said to have lost his father very early in life, and his bringing up was completely undertaken by his mother. And the mother of Mencius shares the glory of his entire life, for she has become the symbol in China of the perfect mother, whose idealism and forthrightness glorified her maternal rôle.

Numerous are the stories related of the mother of Mencius—and the most renowned are those which reveal how carefully she chose the environment of her son in his youth. When Mencius was quite young, the family lived near a burial ground. The child who had a strange

flair for mimicry, watched the funeral rites and the ceremonials of the mourners, and soon began to play in imitation of these sombre processions. "If my son begins to conceive these solemn things of life as light matters, to be familiarly mimicked," thought his mother, "he will become callous to them." And so she moved their home. Now however, they were within easy access of the market and the bazaar—and soon Mencius fell to imitating the bargains of the traders and to play at butchering animals for market. This time, the mother of Mencius pondered and moved near the school where she hoped that her son might learn to imitate the scholars. And so he did for a time—but again the playful boy began to while his time away in idleness.

Then one day his mother called him to her side. Before her stood the loom, upon which she laboriously wove her cloth for the garments of her family, a tedious, constant task. Taking up a sharply pointed knife, the boy watched with horror as she cut the entire length of the weaving, ruining the work of long days. Turning to her son, pale with sadness, she said, "I can weave a new cloth; but the hours which you are wasting in idleness will never return to you—they are lost forever." It was a lesson the boy never forgot—and the thought of it is believed to have changed his life. Like Kung, the passion for learning and knowledge was part of his being and he is said to have had as his teacher, Tse-sze the grandson of Confucius, who was one of the greatest apostolates of the Confucian doctrine. Thereafter the image of Confucius, as man and teacher, became an ardent ideal for Mencius

to be approached with all the consecration of his life. Like Confucius, he discerned no limitation to the field of his studies. The ethics of the individual life, the processes of man's self-perfection, concerned him no less than the processes of a perfected government and a just national economy. The happiness of men—both as citizens of a state and as members of the human brotherhood—was close to him, and his courageous spirit minced no words in bringing the reckless contemporary rulers to task. Less constrained than Confucius by gentleness of spirit, and having already the Confucian principles to steady himself upon like adamant supports, he used a rapier-like gift of words to set contemporary rulers and officials to task. Protected by the respect for scholars, which had grown up in the century, he did not conceal his words. And though the rulers themselves did not alter their way of life, generations of men thenceforth set the words of Mencius second only to Confucius as a guide to human conduct.

Like Confucius, Mencius journeyed to the rulers of the various principalities calling them to task, and hoping to gain the administration of their government, as a seat for his ideas of reform. But after visiting Chi and Liang and a few other provinces, and seeing the futility of convincing them, he returned to his teaching and writing.

His teachings are Confucian in essence, although the emphasis is somewhat changed, and he pronounces the accent mark in new places. His emphasis upon the essential virtue of men, for instance, far exceeds the words of Confucius in this matter, as though he felt it necessary to

transmit to his contemporaries a renewed sense of self-confidence. Perhaps it was his intent to reinvest humanism with a special dignity. Against the bestiality of the sovereigns, he set the example of potential human perfection. His was an age when men needed to renew their belief in high values and in themselves. "Everything is within man—he has but to seek within himself and he will find all. But to neglect this, is to lose all." To Mencius, the highest virtues were benevolence, righteousness, propriety and knowledge—and the way to these lay in the human heart. The capacity of man's heart for the highest attainment was an unassailable principle for him. But he also demanded that human beings—in whom the potentiality of evolution was endless—must find the conditions of justice on earth, so that they might thus consummate their possibilities.

The perfect state, for Mencius, was not unlike the perfect state of Confucius—save that perhaps Mencius crystallized it into more specific form and proclaimed it to his royal interlocutors somewhat more pungently. Frequently the anecdotes of Mencius and his conversations with the rulers, are punctuated with notations that the "king changed color"—a subtle compliment to the forthrightness of this perfect philosopher, whom no crown could awe. It is said of Mencius that "his appearance had the dignity of the Tai Mountain and his mind was broad as the Yellow Sea"—against the impact of these, many a royal cheek paled and flushed.

"The king must regard himself of least importance in a government, if he wishes the happiness of his subjects. It

is the people who are of most importance; the country is second—and the king comes only last.” Thus he would admonish them. “Follow the will of the majority. When you treat your subjects like grass, they have a right to count you, their king, as an enemy.”

His political and governmental ideas are infused with decision—he based his perfect state upon a land system which allotted a unit to each family. Thus a square of about 115 acres was to be allowed to a group of eight families. Within this square an equal ninth central square was cultivated together by the entire group for the tax on the whole community square. But that which each family cultivated in its own square remained free and clear for its own use. Officials of the government received salaries to be fixed according to the profit of this tithe. The wages of laborers were also to be computed upon the profit of their labors. For urban centers, Mencius advocated that each family receive a certain bit of ground on which to plant a mulberry grove to cultivate silkworms, an essential of life and industry of the day. He denounced sales taxes on goods in the market—although he allowed a tax on the stalls in the market place. But he denounced the hampering of free trade by tax. Similarly with duties—he spoke strongly for free trade and the elimination of all restrictions and customs.

In the “Book of Mencius,” a conversation on the subject with the Minister of Sung furnishes a delightful evidence both of his daring and his political theories. The Minister, in response to his admonitions about taxations, said to him, “To levy one in ten (tithe) and take off the



custom and market taxes is more than I can do now. With your leave, I shall lighten them, and wait until next year to stop them. Will that do?"

To which Mencius answered, "There was once a man who stole his neighbor's fowls daily. Someone told him 'This is not the way of a gentleman.' To which he answered, 'With your leave I shall take fewer. I shall steal one fowl a month and wait till next year to stop stealing.' If you know it is not right, stop it at once. Why wait until next year?"

Again one recalls with equal admiration his daring words to King Seuen of Tse: "Suppose," said Mencius to the King, "that one of your ministers were to entrust his wife and children to the care of his friend while he went to travel and on returning found that his friend had caused his wife and children to suffer from cold and hunger—how ought he to deal with him?"

"The King said, 'He should cast him off.'"

"Mencius proceeded, 'Suppose that the chief criminal judge could not regulate the officers under him—how would you deal with him?' . . . The King said, 'Dismiss him.'"

"Mencius again said, 'If within the four boundaries of your kingdom there is no good government what is to be done?'"

"The King looked to right and left and spoke of other matters."

No less decided was Mencius in his beliefs of the social aspects of the government. For him, it was the sacred duty of the State to set forth a system of insurances for widows

and widowers, for the orphans and homeless. He also held it the responsibility of governments to institute systems of public education and insure employment. The elective system was a *sine qua non* for the good state to Mencius and he thus very precisely informs one of the rulers, "If one of your ministers tell you that so-and-so is a man of ability, that is not sufficient for you to choose him. If all your officers say he is good, you still can't use him. But if the people say he is able, examine him, and afterwards appoint him."

Through the writings in his Book, "Sayings of Mencius," which China has justly added to the Confucian Six Classics as one of the eminent works of its history, the man Mencius stands forth—great because of his reverence to his Master; inimitable because of his artless courage; lovable because of his tremendous faith in the spirit and heart of humanity. Today, the Tablet of Mencius is hung in the Temples consecrated to the great Confucius, as one of the four greatest Apostles of the Sage. So, too, in the sacred memory of China, the spirit of Meng-tse walks beside Kung the Master, as a son walking the way of his father.

In a manner, however, the sons of Confucius are legion—for did he not in effect, beget a nation? And in the well of the Chinese spirit, that real spirit of the dragon kingdom which knows courtliness and beauty, and the inexhaustible ardor of learning, deep in its waters one may see reflected the face of Kung. As Chu Hsi, the great commentator of Confucius, wrote long after, while he reflected upon Confucius,

My little lake was like a mirror spread,  
Across its surface, lights and shadows sped,  
"Whence came this limpidness of thine?" I said,  
It answered, "From a living fountainhead."

What better, than to name Confucius the fountainhead  
of the spirit of Chinese philosophy.

\* \* \*

### LAO TZE

Perhaps when the keys to the secret knowledge are discovered, men may also learn the mystery of spiritual cycles—why certain ages were so sterile of eternal values and other ages so vibrant with untold bounties. Thus, we may learn why the great Chieng-ti, the Heaven, vouchsafed to China in the same age her two great illuminati, Confucius and Lao Tze. A stream of millenniums had flowed by in the nation's history until their coming and more than two millenniums have passed since their going, but China has not yet seen their like again. And as the harvest ripens in its appointed season, so, it would seem that the spiritual yield of peoples gestates, ripens and bears its fruit, never a generation too soon, but at the appointed time. And so, like the swamp-blooming orchid, it was the muddy soil of the dying Chou dynasty that gave China its finest spiritual flowering.

Unlike the figure of Confucius which comes down to us in its human, vital and lifelike image, the image of his elder contemporary, Lao Tze, is aureoled in mystery. It is as though, loving anonymity, Lao had receded behind

the swift, brief doctrine of his writings which he has left to posterity. Certainly nothing would have pleased him better than to know that his personality remains but in evanescent outline, while his Teaching alone stands as the eloquent proof of his transcendent presence. All that is left to record the earthly career of this Ancient Wiseman of China are the comparatively few words of Ssu-ma-Chien, the classic historian of China, who briefly limned among his biographies the figure of the great Taoist.

According to the words of Ssu-ma-Chien, the great Lao Tze was born probably of poor parents, in the district of Honan. His given name was Li-Er, having the singular meaning of Plum and Ear. Nothing is recorded of his early years but his later positions indicate that he was highly gifted and that his education was a brilliant one. For he received the unusual appointment of register or historiographer in the Imperial Court of Chou, which had then been established in the City of Lo Yan, not far from the present town of Ho-nan-fu.

Thus briefly does the Chinese historian sum up Lao's life:

"Lao Tze was born in the hamlet of Chu jan (Good man's Bend) in Li-Hsi-ang (Grinding) County, of Ku Hien (Thistle) District, in the Province of Chu (Bramble Land). His family was of the Li gentry (Li meaning plum). His proper name was Er (ear) his positive title was Po-Yang (prince positive) his appellation Tan (long lobed). In Cheu (the state of Everywhere) he was in charge of the secret archives as state historian.

"Confucius went to Cheu in order to consult Lao Tze on the rules of propriety. When Confucius, speaking of propriety, praised the sages of antiquity Lao Tze said, 'The men of whom you speak, sir, together with their bones have mouldered. Their words alone are extant. If a noble man finds his time, he rises, but if he does not find his time he drifts like a roving-plant and wanders about. I observe that the wise merchant hides his treasures deeply as if he were poor. The noble man of perfect virtue assumes an attitude as though he were stupid. Let go, sir, your proud airs, your many wishes, your affectations and exaggerated plans. All this is of no use to you, sir. That is what I have to communicate to you and that is all.'

"Confucius left. Unable to understand Lao Tze, he addressed his disciples saying, 'I know that the birds can fly. I know that the fishes can swim. I know that the wild animals can run. For the running, one can make nooses; for the swimming, one can make nets; for the flying, one can make arrows. As to the dragon, I cannot know how he can bestride wind and clouds when he rises heavenwards. Today I saw Lao Tze. Is he perhaps like the dragon?'

"Lao Tze practised reason and virtue. His doctrine aims at self-concealment and namelessness. Lao Tze resided in Cheu most of his life. When he foresaw the decay of Cheu he departed, and came to the frontier. The custom officer Yin-Hi said, 'Sir, since it pleases you to retire, I request you for my sake to write a book.'

"Thereupon Lao Tze wrote a book of two parts consisting of five thousand and odd words, in which he dis-

cussed the concepts of reason and virtue. Then he departed.

"No one knows where he died."

Perhaps never has a Teacher, whose followers numbered millions, left so ephemeral a record. To this sketch subsequent followers and devotees of Lao Tze added their details, some touched with the inimitable genius of the litterateur as in the case of the great Kwang-Tze, and others, far later, when the accumulation of myth and tale had made an epopee of the story of Taoism.

Thus a thousand years after Lao's passing, the stone tablet placed on the Temple of Lao Tze by Hsieh Tao Han, gives some of the fabled additions which posterity added to the life of the Teacher:

"After primal ether commenced action," the Tablet of Hsieh Tao Han tells us, "the earliest period of time unfolded. The curtain of the sky was displayed and the sun and moon were suspended in it. The four-cornered earth was established and the mountains and streams found their places in it. Then the subtle influences operated like the heaving of breath and subsiding and again expanding; the work of production went on in its seasons above and below. All things were formed from materials and were matured and maintained. There were the people, the rulers and superiors.

"August sovereigns of highest antiquity living in nests on trees in summer and in caves in winter. Silently and spirit-like they exercised their wisdom. Dwelling like quails and drinking the rain and dew like newly hatched birds, they had their great ceremonies like the great terms

of heaven and earth not requiring to be regulated by dishes and stands and their music corresponded to common harmonies of heaven and earth without the guidance of bells and drums."

After this idyllic beginning of earth, Hsieh tells us that men gradually began to lose their simplicity and the knowledge of Tao and became bad, mean and treacherous. And it was then that He, "Who knows how to cleanse the current of the stream by clearing its source," sent to the world Lao Tze.

"The master Lao, was conceived under the influence of a star. Whence he received the breath of life we cannot fathom but he pointed to the plum tree under which he was born and adopted it as his surname. We do not know whence came his marvellous powers conceived in the womb for more than 70 years; when he was born the hair on his head was white and he took the designation, 'Old Youth.' In his person, three gateways and two bony pillars formed the distinctive marks on his ears and eyes; two of the symbols for five and ten brilliant marks were left by the wonderful tread of his feet and the grasp of his hands. From the time of Fu Hsi down to the Kau dynasty in uninterrupted succession, dynasty after dynasty his person appeared, but with changed names. In the time of the Kings Weng and Wu he discharged the duties of curator of the Royal Library and Recorder under the Pillar. Later on in that dynasty he filled different offices but did not change his appearance. As soon as Hsuan Ni (Confucius) saw him he sighed over him as the Dragon whose powers are difficult to be known. Yi Hsi keeper of

the gate, keeping his eyes directed to every quarter, recognized the 'True man' as he was hastening to retirement. He prevailed on him to put forth his extraordinary ability and write his book of two parts—to lead the nature of man back to the Tao and celebrating the usefulness of 'doing nothing.'

"The style of it is very condensed and the reasoning deep and far-reaching. The Hexagram (Yi King) which is made up of the dragons on the wing is not to be compared with it in exquisite subtlety nor match it in brightness and obscurity. If employed to regulate the person, the spirit becomes clear and the water still. If employed to govern the state, the people return to simplicity and become sincere and good. When one goes on to refine his body in accordance with it, the traces of material things are rolled away from it; in rainbow hued robe and mounted on a stork he goes forward and backward to the purple palace; on its piece of gold and wing of jade he feasts, in the beautified and pure capital." And thus on, the writer tells us of the beauties and vastnesses of Tao. Thus, one thousand years after his passing, tradition had given to Lao Tze immortality and told of his reincarnation throughout the history of China in preparation for his great mission to bring the Tao Te Ching.

Through the nebulosity of these records, tradition has ascertained that Lao Tze was born about 604 B.C., and hence was fifty years the elder of Confucius. Although some authorities have cast doubt on the possibility of his meeting with Confucius, it might well have happened that the younger Teacher, Kung, who was so avid for



learning and traveled through his country in its quest, should have journeyed to see this great spirit whose erudition must have been famed through China. Nor is it unlikely that Confucius, who so venerated the past of his country, should have sought to verify his knowledge from the ancient records themselves and by inquiries from the register himself, whose knowledge of them was unparalleled.

Apparently, Lao Tze had spent the greater part of his life pouring over these Records of the Ages which came down from the times of Yao the Great. In these annals of millenniums, he could mark well the inexorable laws of destiny. He could see the rise and fall of dynasty upon dynasty; he could note how selfless labors of enlightened monarchs were often razed by the corruptions of their posterity—and the sweep of the generations was mirrored to him from out these century-old documents, which told so pregnant a tale to his sagacious spirit. For there apparently came to him a poignant sense of the transitory character of all earthly efforts—how the current of time swept before it all earthly things, without leaving a single trace. Against the perspective of these centuries, he must have seen the futility of many problems which racked men's souls; he must have evaluated the puerility of innumerable wars and conflicts for which men immolated themselves—all sucked into the inexorable vortex of the eternal and leaving no trace upon the surface. But above these frantic gestures of men, Lao Tze learned to perceive the Dispassionate Continuity of Eternity. And hence, sitting quietly before his Records, the spirit of Lao

Tze learned to possess the centuries—and before the synthesis of ages, he no longer attached great importance to the agonies of a single epoch. For him the tiny stream of temporary concerns flowed into that vast, eternal ocean of the Unchanging Values, which alone merited possessing. In this quiet historiographer, one gets a fleeting reminiscence of that later Mystic Thomas à Kempis, who even as he sat quietly and unnoticeably copying the monastic manuscripts, absorbed the verities and inscribed the *Imitation of Christ*. Nor is the spirit of these two works the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Imitation of Christ* so vastly unrelated, though one was written before the image of the Rising Sun and one at the foot of the Cross.

In this light, the meeting of Lao Tze and Confucius, as related by Ssu-ma-Chien and by Kwang Tze has the feeling of authenticity. For Lao Tze had already passed eighty when Confucius, to him a mere youth of thirty, came to him. He spoke to him, as an elder and a teacher to a pupil—and already he could speak with conviction of the futility of all externals, because his spirit had assimilated the doctrine of quietism, of inner illumination, which infuses his work. Nor am I inclined to see the tremendous diversity of the Teachings of the two sages—their conclusions were often startlingly alike. Taking a page from the *Celestial Song of Krishna*, one might have said that they were two different Yogas of approach—one through the Yoga of renunciation of action, the other through the Yoga of action. But that the truth itself, the *Tao* which they envisioned was the One.

A great difference lies in the manner of expounding



LAO TZE

From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich



their Teachings—but that, too, may be explained by the difference of the Teachers. Confucius wrote voluminously and loved to teach. And both in his writings and in his teachings we are admitted to a man throughout all the processes of his life, throughout the entire unfoldment of his philosophy as it came to him in a life of activity over the course of a half century. It is a teaching taking shape through the minutiae of daily life—a life fretted by the anxiety to serve his epoch through action; a life which demanded many external impacts and which thrust him into the very vortex of the tide. Not so Lao Tze—the brief 5,000 words of his entire doctrine were inscribed as the final synthesis of his life, just before his permanent retirement from all outer action; moreover, his had been a life which found illumination through meditative processes, which neither sought to gain students nor converts, and which turned from all outer honors with a realization of their futility. Thus differing in life so completely, the two Sages naturally differed in their expression and their approach, but not in their final implications of the ends of their Teachings. If Confucius emphasized the practical aspects of life and the relations of men to each other, it was because his voice was essentially of his time and for the Chinese people. Lao Tze was a universalist, who cut across all nationalities to reach all humanity, and his doctrine was mellowed with compassion. In his doctrine, the justice of Confucius had given way to love, and he pronounced a message singularly close to that which rose six centuries later in Galilee.

And thus, selflessly, in acquiescence to the keeper of the

portals, he set forth this doctrine in the Tao Te Ching, the Canon of Reason and Virtue, which like the "Bhagavat Gita" or the Yoga aphorisms, is said to have its final explanation only in the mystic experiences of the spirit. Composed of 81 brief chapters, some in prose and others in verse, the Tao Te Ching is like a string of pearls, each chapter being distinct and separate as a philosophic doctrine, but all bound on the single filament: the belief that all these consecrations of the spirit must eventually lead to the Tao. And what is the explanation of the Tao? Its definition has baffled all students because Tao is itself undefinable, like the Ineffable of all doctrines and philosophies, which cannot be set into the confines of a category. Hence some men have called it God; some have called it the Word or the Way; some have spoken of it as the Logos or Brahman. In effect, They are the one—the Cosmic Impulse, the Primary Cause from which all emanates and towards which all strive. And thus, the Tao Te Ching may be called the exposition of the path leading towards the Tao, which is itself the Path. Perhaps its implication has never been more closely expressed than in the words of Christ, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

In the Canon of Reason and Virtue, then, Lao Tze sets forth his conviction that the external life of humanity is but ephemeral and men must find the eternity, provided alone by the way of the spirit, which leads to the Tao. Tao, itself, is set forth in the opening of the Tao Te Ching, in words deeply reminiscent of the Brahman of the Vedas:

"The Tao that can be reasoned is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. The Unnamable is of heaven and earth the beginning. The Namable becomes of the ten thousand things the mother."

In this ineffable Consummation, humanity must find its one desideratum. Hence the Ancient Sage admonished the quester for the truth to set the world of senses and earthly desires behind him, and turn to the one Source which was the begetter of all things, spirit and matter. To attain this One, man must learn that passionless tranquillity, which can no longer be moved by the abasements or flatteries of the world, and regards them equally unmoved. That spirit which was all-containing, which through knowledge of itself had reached the imperviousness to the gestures and agitations of temporal life, was for Lao Tze the complete conqueror, the spirit on the path to Tao. Know thyself in the innermost recesses of thy being and you will be free, was the essence of his command to the seeker—all else was but a roundabout way to the most necessary. "If investigation of his spiritual nature is a man's chief force, the concentration of his energies will bring him to a state of sensibility of impression similar to that of a child. If this is so in the case of the ruler, he will wash himself clean of obscure and gloomy thoughts and will become sound of mind and govern on the principles founded on love, remaining in perfect repose." Thus says the Tao—nor is it far from the admonition, "Except ye be as little children, ye will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

For the great Taoist, this guilelessness of the illumined

spirit was impregnable against every dark manifestation of life, because its very flexibility disarmed and wore away all opposition. "Like water which is the most yielding element, can dash against and wear away the most solid, so does the action of inaction."

Humility was a force which carried men to the sphere of the elect, in the words of Lao Tze, who like Christ saw that the "least of these" here might find the highest grace in the kingdom of heaven. Tao adjudged men not in the measure of the world. "He who humbleth himself will be exalted; he who exalteth himself will be humbled—this has been the groundwork of my Teaching," Lao says. Here, indeed, might be speaking the tender spirit of the Assisian, who 1,800 years later, discovered the irresistible power of humility. Conversely, he accounted the conceit of pedantry a disease of the spirit: "To know and yet think we do not know is the highest attainment; not to know and yet think we know is a disease. It is simply by being pained at the thought of having the disease that we are preserved from it. The sage has not the disease. He knows the pain that is inseparable from it, and therefore does not have it." Thus Lao Tze constantly distinguishes the sage as the spirit completely aware of the anguish of earthly seductions, and completely immune to their illusory blandishments.

Impersonality in all things marks the sage—and renders him as eternal as the earth or Heaven. "Heaven is long enduring and earth continues long. The reason that heaven and earth are able to endure and continue thus long is because they do not live of or for themselves.



This is how they are able to continue and endure. Therefore the sage puts his person last and is yet found in the foremost place; he treats his person as if it were foreign to him, and yet that person is preserved. Is it not because he had no personal and private ends that therefore such ends are realized?"

Recognition by the world was in itself the greatest of temptations, and was a delusion of which men must be aware, since it ensnared them and enticed them from Tao. "When meritorious service leads to fame," he cautions, "it is time to follow the heavenly rule and retire into obscurity." Indifferent to the criticisms of people he was equally wary of their adulations. For neither adulation nor criticism could spare a man's spirit the inevitable evaluation of the Tao—hence, far better was it for man to abhor the judgment of other men but to be his own inexorable judge—and to gird all his forces, not for the conquest of others, but for himself. "Who has knowledge of others is intelligent—of himself, enlightened. He who gains a victory over others is strong; but if he gains a victory over himself he is all-powerful." Were not these the identical words which resounded out of the land of Aryavarttha from the lips of the great Gautama? "To conquer oneself is better than to vanquish a thousand warriors"—for, like a fugue, this motif has sounded in the credo of all teachers, against the self-vindications of all men.

And having appraised himself, having conquered the ailments of his spirit, man would understand that the "immaterial" was all-puissant, for "As the vase, molded

of clay, is useless without the empty space left for its contents—so useless would be the material, however beneficial, without the spirit.”

Nor is the Tao Te Ching limited alone to the conduct of individuals—as with Kung, Lao Tze warned his contemporaries against those social and economic iniquities which drove men to despair.

How uniquely modern sound his admonitions on the futility of war—for wars “to end wars” had even then been going on for millenniums. “The object of the superior man is to preserve peace,” he proclaimed. “When the empire is governed according to divine principles, the best horses will be raised for work in the fields. Otherwise houses will continue to be bred only for war” . . . “There is no greater calamity than lightly to engage in war. To do that is to risk losing what is so precious. Thus, when opposing weapons are crossed, he who deplores their crossing, will conquer.”

Other social wrongs were condemned by him, especially capital punishment, against which he cautioned, “The people do not fear death—to what purpose then, to frighten them with death? If people were really afraid of death and I could always seize those who do wrong and put them to death, who would continue to dare to do wrong? There is always One who presides over the infliction of death. He who would inflict death in the room of Him who presides over it may be described as hewing wood instead of the Great Carpenter. Seldom is it that he who undertakes the hewing instead of the Great Carpenter does not cut his own hands.”

Perhaps above all the precepts of his Teachings, rises those words which place Lao Tze among the greatest humanitarians of all times—his call to man as the servant and lover of all men: "The sage has no invariable mind of his own, he makes the mind of the people his mind. To those who are good to me, I am good. And to those who are not good to me, I am also good—and thus all become good. To those who are sincere with me I am sincere. And to those who are not sincere with me, I am also sincere. And thus all finally get to be sincere." Thus his entire Teaching is permeated with the attainment of a spirit who has conceived justice only as human—but compassion and love, as divine.

There is an ecstasy in his writing, when he contemplates the Tao—that Godhead which gave us life, and which sustains that life by the infinite gifts of his hands. Thus Tao is eternally at rest yet eternally evolving, eternally accomplishing—it is that "activity in non-activity" which Lao Tze, as Buddha, believed could be achieved by the illumined human, who no longer dissipated his forces in the unnecessary. But who concentrated the gifts of his mind, his body and his spirit in the attainment of the One Objective which was worth attaining—Illumination.

Thus in the comparatively few words of his entire doctrine which he has left for the successive generations, Lao Tze synthesized a teaching universal in scope—he accomplished that which he admonished all men to accomplish, he "universalized his heart." Since his day sages have pondered over the essence of his words and

have found in them an esoteric and mystic philosophy singularly close to the Vedic writings, and to the later teachings of Christianity. His words, laden with inner implications, have been the foundation of vast subsequent writings among disciples and followers who searched the well of his teaching and found it depthless. It is not strange that the cryptic brevities of his utterances, which depended so vastly upon the comprehensions of the student, should yield innumerable interpretations. Later centuries, for instance, brought to Tao a tremendous popularity—that acclaim which Lao Tze himself had so greatly, perhaps with prevision, shunned. For these millions of followers Tao was the secret of an elixir of life, a magic formula for longevity and eternal youth. In the minds of the masses, Taoism presented a quick panacea, with the promise of long life and good fortune—a long distance from the austere renunciation of the world and its wiles, which its creator proclaimed.

#### KWANG TZE

On the other hand there were those who comprehended the austere path of discipline and self-adjudgment of the Tao, and the subsequent Taoist writings founded upon the basic doctrine of the Tao Te Ching, have rarely beautiful contributions. Lao Tze, who sought no student, found many over the course of the ages. Among these, perhaps the greatest was Kwang Tze, who must rank with Mencius. Strangely enough, these two Pauls of their respective teachers, Lao Tze and Confucius, were also con-

temporaries—following the two sages by a century. In the writings of Kwang Tze, new light has been shed upon the doctrines of Lao and even upon his personality. Through these enhancements of Kwang Tze's writings, with their essential suggestions of practices similar to the Yogas of India and the Upanishadic Teachings, many later commentators have sought to trace Lao Tze's inspiration to the Upanishads and to doctrines of India. Reason challenges this completely—and one must prefer to believe they were simultaneous expressions of philosophies which are closely harmonious. But, if the source is Truth—may one not find it equally over the trails of the Hindu Kush or in the deserts of Khotan? It must be there for the questing.

It is true that Taoism implies, like Yoga, a system of self-development of mind and spirit. And the writings of Kwang Tze suggest the attitudes of meditation and Samadhi which are so essentially a part of the Hindu Yoga. But since all such Teachings were presumed by the East to be taught in deeply veiled terms and only to the elect, it is undoubtedly these aspects of Lao Tze's writings for which his true disciples sought.

Kwang Tze was one of these rare disciples of the Ancient Wiseman, Lao. Born in the Fourth Century B.C., he apparently held a petty official post during his early years and later turned to his writing entirely. It is Ssu-ma-Chien to whom we must again look for the brief accounts of his life. Says his historian: "Kwang had made himself well acquainted with all literature of his time but preferred the views of Lao Tze and ranked himself among

his followers, so that, of the more than ten myriads of characters contained in his published writings, the greater part is occupied with metaphorical illustrations of Lao's doctrine. He made 'the Old Fisherman,' 'the Robber Kih,' and the 'Cutting open Satchels' to satirize and expose the disciples of Confucius and clearly exhibit the sentiments of Lao. Such names and characters as Wei-Lei, Hsu and Khang sant tzi are fictitious and the pieces where they occur are not to be understood as narratives of real events.

"But Kwang was an admirable writer and skilful composer and by his instances and truthful descriptions hit and exposed the Mohists and Literati. The ablest scholars of his day could not escape his satire nor reply to it while he allowed and enjoyed it himself with his sparkling dashing style. And thus it was that the greatest men, even kings and princes, could not use him for their purposes."

The historian speaks with justice. For Kwang turns with faultless reverence to Lao Tze for his inspiration—and it is this complete consecration to the words of his master that conquers us in Kwang, because essentially he was an incorrigible spirit, a laughing philosopher. And besides the spiritual tranquillity attained by his master he viewed all other men's frantic gestures and motions as infantile. While his contemporary Mencius, daringly re-proved contemporary rulers, Kwang laughed them to scorn. His infectious pen whisked away their pomposity, and left them helpless. But in the sanctuary of his heart there was a place of silence, of solemn tribute to his master, Lao Tze. And his laughter was for the puppets

of earth—his deep reverent humility for the servants of Heaven and Tao.

He ranks among the great writers of China—a Voltaire or Anatole France, who used the sharpest of probes to pick sensitive skins. He laughed at proffered honors and shooed off king's messengers. The following episodes related of him by Ssu-ma-Chien, and probably taken from some of Kwang's own writings, might well crystallize his attitude towards temporal honors:

"King Wei of Khu, having heard of the ability of Kwang Tze, sent messengers with large gifts to bring him to his court and promising also that he would make him his chief minister. Kwang Tze only laughed and said to them, 'A thousand ounces of silver are a great gain to me, and to be a high noble and minister is a most honorable position. But have you not seen the victim-ox for the border sacrifice? It is carefully fed for several years, and robed with rich embroidery that it may be fit to enter the Grand Temple. When the time comes for it to do so, it would prefer being just a little pig. But it cannot get to be so. Go way, quickly, and do not soil me with your presence. I had rather amuse myself and enjoy myself in the midst of a filthy ditch than be subject to the rules and restrictions of the courts of a sovereign. I have determined never to take office but prefer the enjoyment of my own free will.'"

Thus, the glamor of honors was of no interest for the Socratic philosopher, who had learned to evaluate the gifts of men.

Among Kwang's most eminent writings were those in

which he contrasted the approach to the philosophies of Confucius and his own beloved master. In his presentation of Confucius, Kwang constantly pays reverence to the sage's yearning for knowledge, but he is concerned with pointing out that ultimately Confucius would arrive at the same doctrine of quietism and renunciation of action as had the doctrines of the great Lao Tze. Thus, for instance, in one of his imaginary episodes in which Confucius is the interlocutor, the latter is made to perceive the futility of intellectual knowledge and external recognitions:

"Confucius asked Ze-nang-hu (the pupil of Lao Tze) the following: 'I was twice driven from Lu; the tree was felled over me in Lung; I was obliged to disappear from Wei; I was reduced to extreme distress in Shang and Kau; I was held in a state of siege between Khan and Zhau. I have encountered these various calamities and more; my followers are more and more dispersed. Whence have all these things befallen me?'

"Ze-nang-hu replied, 'Have you heard of the flight of Lin-Hiu of Kia? How he abandoned his round jade symbol of rank worth 1,000 pieces of silver and hurried away with his infant son on his back? If it be asked whether he did it for the market value of the child, one knows that its value was small in comparison with the jade. If it be asked again whether it was because of the troubles connected with his office, one may answer that the child was bound to give him far more trouble. Why was it then, that abandoning the jade token worth 1,000 pieces of silver, he hurried away with the child on his



back? Lin-Hui said, 'The union between me and the token rested on the ground of gain, that between me and the child was of heaven's appointment.' Where the union is profit, when the pressure of poverty, calamity, distress and injury come, the parties abandon one another; when it is heaven's appointment, they hold in the same circumstances to one another. The difference is great. Moreover the intercourse of superior men is tasteless water, that of mean men as sweet as new wine. But the tastelessness of the superior men leads to affection, while the sweetness of mean men to aversion. The union which originates without any cause will end in separation without any cause.'

"Confucius answered, 'I have reverently received your instructions.' And thereupon with a slow step and an assumed air of ease, he returned to his own house. There he made an end of studying and put away his book. His disciples came no more to make their bows to him, but their affection for him increased the more."

In this imaginary dialogue, as in many more in which Confucius and Lao Tze or his disciples are the protagonists, Kwang points out the Taoist's indifference to the externals, and the final acceptance by Confucius of this way to the Ultimate.

Perhaps nothing so demonstrates the acute apposition of the disciples of Confucius and those of Lao Tze, as in their attitude to the subject of death. Throughout the Confucian Classics there is a solemn reverence attached to the death, and to the ceremonials accompanying it, as though this passing was to be marked by definite attention.

A vast portion of the "Book of Rites" and other teachings of the Sage indicate the significance he attached to each detail of these funeral rituals. For Lao Tze, as for his pupil Kwang, this concern for death was incomprehensible, as with the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads, which perceived the discarding of the body as a great liberation, and death itself as a threshold to larger adventures of the spirit. Kwang inscribed some of his most touching and exquisite passages to the contrast between life and the great Homecoming, death. "The ancients," he writes, "describe death as the loosening of the cord on which God suspended life. What we can point to are the faggots that have been consumed, but the fire is transmitted elsewhere and we know not that it is over and ended." That Fire, which was the only reality, has returned to Tao.

There, where Confucius persistently refused to permit his pupils to concern themselves with the drawing of the Curtain, for the Taoist, behind the Curtain lay the promise, Tao Itself, the Ineffable to which the entire journey was leading and for which man was eternally striving. Life was a brief interlude in the most perfect of attainments: "Men's life between heaven and earth is like a white colt's passing a crevice, and suddenly disappearing. As with a plunge and an effort, he comes forth and easily and quietly enters again. By a transformation men live and by another transformation they die. Living things are made sad by death and mankind grieves over it. But it is only the removal of the sword from the sheath and the emptying of the natural vessel of its contents. In the midst

of yielding to the change there may be some confusion, but the intellectual and animal souls are taking their leave and the body will follow them. This is the Great Returning Home."

In this conception of death, one again sees the great relationships of the philosophy of Lao Tze with the concepts of far-off India—that belief that man never begins to live until the moment of Death.

And this indifference to the body, so manifest through the teachings of Lao and his disciples, did not leave Kwang, the inimitable, even at the moment of his own passing when he could look with a gently satiric calm at the concern of his pupils to do him honor in funeral grandeur. These conventions were meaningless and laughable to him—for even at death's door, he could pronounce lightly that which he had written: "Perhaps, you and he and I, we all—are we not only dreams?" And when his pupils offered him a sumptuous funeral, on his deathbed, he forbade them saying, "I have heaven and earth for my coffin, the sun and moon for my shades. I have the stars and planets as pearls to fill my mouth. I have all things around as funeral gifts. Don't you think these are ample? And what can be added to these natural beauties for the funeral ceremonies?" His disciples said to him, "We are afraid the kites and hawks will eat you." But Kwang replied, "Why be partial to maggots and rob the birds? To be eaten by birds is better than by ants in the bowels of the earth."

Thus smilingly, the scintillating pupil of Lao faced the

awakening of his dream and the approach to the Effulgent Unknown, which held the great Reality: the Tao.

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Of Lao Tze, himself, the passing has never been recorded. Tradition has it that after he had penned the Tao Te Ching, at the behest of the keeper of the western gates, he mounted his yak and set out towards the great West. The few episodes of Kwang which speak of Lao's burial are acknowledged as fiction—and for his followers, Lao Tze has never died but remains living and immortal. Later traditions reported him as being seen along the inner trails of Central Asia on his path to the Northwest. Nor is he the only Luminatus whom Asia has believed walked out of the gates of his homeland, leaving no traces, but turning forever to the Realities which beckoned him from afar. Thus was it, says the East, with Apollonius; with the great Fifth Dalai Lama; with Tzong Ka Pa and many others, who turned to that Happy Island where immortality awaited them and where they could drink from the inexhaustible Source of Tao. And as with Asia, let us believe that there is some happy Homeland, some Mount Me-ru, or some Land of Agarti beyond Tangla, where these Ineffable Spirits of East and West, who fathomed the Eternal Truths, are gathered together in Communion, laboring eternally for the welfare of that humanity for which Each of Them in turn, so selflessly sacrificed their lives.

# JAPAN

SHINTOISM

BUDDHISM

THE SAMURAI AND CODE OF BUSHIDO

“TEAISM”—ART AND RELIGION



### III

## JAPAN

### SHINTOISM

IN 1912, as Japan was mourning the loss of that truly resplendent Imperial figure of its history—Emperor Mitsuhiro known as the Meiji—the world was startled by a deeply poignant incident. While the funeral procession of the Mikado was leaving the Palace, General Nogi, the brilliant hero of Port Arthur, committed suicide together with his wife. General Nogi, beloved idol of Nippon, who had brought victory to the nation, who had stoically sacrificed his two sons in battle and had acted as the astute adviser to his Emperor, could not endure life without the Sovereign whom he had so devotedly served. Facing what seemed to him a meaningless future without the object of his loyalty, he committed *Suppuku*, known in the west by the more familiar name of *Hara Kiri*, taking his life in the manner of the Samurai, the warrior-knights of Yamato.

Thus, the world could again perceive that the Code of Bushido—the covenant of the Samurai—burned inextinguishably in the heart of Nippon. Modernity has not effaced from the spirit of Yamato the remembrance of that noontide of her knighthood, when men lived and died chivalrously. For, to understand the profound implications of this incident, it is necessary to understand

Bushido, the true faith of Japan, and to look deep in its well for the spirit of Shinto, which has poured its infusion into the Japanese soul.

Age after age, as the cortège of the nations passes before us, we may perceive that certain peoples have been animated by the conviction of their unique destiny—as though they were marked for a fate apart. So was it with the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans. This conviction marks these people throughout their history, renders them in a manner irresistible, even long after their life as a nation has passed. It is this infusion, living in each member of the race, which has made the Jew unconquerable against 5,000 years of persecution, of dispersion; which gives him the consciousness of a racial identity and renders him impervious to assimilation. With the Jews, as with the classic peoples, this faith in their race as a chosen one, is born of the belief in a covenant with Divinity itself.

This sense of a national destiny indwells also in the people of Nippon, the Land of Yamato—it is the heritage which has come down with the cult of Shintoism, the Way of the Gods. This belief has spun a filament which leads back to the divine Progenetrix of the Imperial Line, the Goddess of the Sun, Amaterasu. To understand Japan; to sense the spirit which pervades each act of her life; to know, on one hand, the fragrant subtlety of her art and, on the other, her stoic impersonality, one needs must go back to Shinto, her original Teaching. Translated, Shinto may be interpreted as meaning, "Man making his choice at the crossroads of life." What could better define the path of religion than this conscious election of the way



to salvation? Lafcadio Hearn, who so deeply loved the spirit of Nippon, called it the Religion of Patriotism—perhaps to patriotism, we may with Nitobe, add loyalty and purity.

In the Asiatic continent, which traces its memories and its annals back over the course of millenniums, Japan is comparatively but an infant nation, since her historic age begins only in the Sixth Century before Christ, with the great Emperor Jimmo Tenu. The ages which precede that period are bathed in fabled nature lore, and it is probable that in those centuries the concurrent tribal streams of the Ainus, the Polynesians and other surrounding peoples, were flowing into the islands through Idsumo, thence to the island of Kiushiu and to the Province of Yamato, here to merge into the race now known as the Japanese. And into the crucible of Japan's national folk life, these peoples each poured the memories of Shamanism, of Druidism, of Animism and of those other worships which they remembered as young races, close to primeval nature.

Shinto has its roots in this primeval infancy of earth and reflects these folk-souls' half-remembered dreams of earth's beginnings. Its beliefs were transmitted orally down the centuries. The first actual inscribed records of this Pathway of the Gods and its books of genesis, come to us from but a few sources of the Seventh Century of Japan. For only then did the people begin to set down into writing the beliefs and myths, carried on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The first of these works on Shinto is the Kojiki, ascribed to the year 712 A. D.,

comprising a "Record of Ancient Matters" and, in effect, the Book of Genesis of Shinto. Second comes the Nihongi, believed to have been written in 720 A. D., in which were included Chronicles of Nippon's ancient life. And in the Yengi period, was set down the Yengi-shiki, a book of the ancient ritual practices and invocations (norito). Fourth in the list of these early classics is placed the Manyo-Shiu, which has no bearing on the actual Shinto religion; it is a collection of poems compiled about the end of the Eighth Century and evidencing already in Japan a creative life, sophisticated and delicately subtle.

To Nippon these written records are a reflection of an age-old record, for Shinto regards the beginnings of Japanese history as ages before, not only in the early days of earth, but even before that, within the precincts of Heaven. For it is in the Takama-no-Hara, the Plain of High Heaven, that the seeds of this beginning of Nippon lie. In the Kojiki and Nihongi we learn the story of the Creation of Earth and the birth of gods and men—gods which have a close kinship to Japan itself and have deep concern in her people and their destiny. Thus, also, did the gods on Parnassus watch the destiny of their beloved Hellenes.

The story of Creation is set down in the Kojiki, as it was inscribed from the memories of an aged wiseman, to whom it had come through ages of transmitters. Before earth was created, there existed Chaos, dark and impenetrable and apparently gelatinous. Gradually this chaos began to condense. And the Kojiki thus relates the process: "Now when chaos began to condense, before form and

force were manifest and before aught was named and done, none could know its shape. Nevertheless, Heaven and Earth first parted and three deities (Kami) performed the commencement of creation." Apparently these three deities served to infuse only the beginning of creation into earth, and, having accomplished their mission, they departed as nebulously as they had come. But the earth was not left godless, for once again two deities appeared, Izanagi and Izanami, the first male and female of the universe, and destined to be the divine progenitors of all matter. These two were said to have descended from the floating bridge of Heaven, upon an island in mid-ocean. There they begot their progeny, who comprised physical and geographical forms of earth—its islands, its rocks, its seas, and, too, its winds and elements. But while giving birth to fire, Izanami was scorched and died in her labors. Thereupon, she descended to the Land of Yomi, the kingdom of the dead. Izanagi was grieved beyond measure at the loss of his mate. In his wrath, he destroyed the fire, and followed her down into the nether-world; urging her to return again. There in the darkness, the voice of Izanami came to him, promising that she would seek the permission of the rulers of Yomi to return to him, but entreating him not to look on her, in death. Nevertheless, Izanagi was impatient, and breaking a tooth from his comb, he lit it as a torch and gazed on the body of Izanami, already in the process of disintegration.

Then the entire dread horror of death smote him, for as the Kojiki tells us, "Maggots were swarming about her

and she was already decaying. In her breast dwelt the Fire Thunder; in her left hand dwelt the Young Thunder; in her right hand dwelt the Earth Thunder; in her left foot dwelt the Rumbling Thunder and in her right foot the Couchant Thunder—together, eight thunder deities had been born and dwelt there."

Seeing his disgust, the voice of Izanami came to him in terrible wrath, "You have put me to shame!" And full of vengeance she begged the Female Fury of Hades to pursue her curious husband. The flight was fast and terrifying—for not only did the female fury pursue Izanagi, but the eight Thunder Deities and the deadly form of Izanami herself, together with numerous lesser furies, joined in the dread race. As he sped from them, Izanagi threw his belongings behind him, and these turned into gods. Only finally was he saved from this vengeful legion. As his first act, he sought water to purge himself completely from the hideous contact with the nether-world. As he lustrated himself, the waters which fell from him turned to gods. And from the waters with which he purged his left eye, was born the Great August Shining One, Amaterasu, herself the Goddess of the Sun, destined to outrank all other divinities in the Nipponese hierarchy. With her were born her two brothers, one the moon-god, and the other, the most incorrigible Susa-no-wo. At first, the Sun goddess and Susa-no-wo, through the mutual exchange of jewels and swords, which they crunched, begot a heavenly issue together, in friendly competition. But soon, Susa-no-wo, known as the "violent man" and the very spirit of perversity, began a consistent

campaign of torment against his sister, especially when she was performing her beneficent and consecrated tasks. When she was cultivating the rice, he would break down the divisions between her fields, or open the sluices. After she had sown her seed, he would secretly creep up behind her and sow inferior seeds, and even break down the dikes letting in the water and spoiling her crops. Nor would he give her peace during her indoor occupations—while she was weaving he flayed a colt backwards, and making a hole in the roof of her Sacred Hall, threw the animal in front of her. And he did other, even more ungodlike and unmentionable things. At these final affronts, Amaterasu, beside herself, hid in the deep recesses of the rock caves of Heaven, threatening that she would never emerge. With her departure, impenetrable darkness descended over earth. The gods, frightened lest the great Sun Goddess deprive earth of her luminous presence, besought her to come out; but to no avail. Holding council they determined to entice her out through strategy. Reasoning, apparently with justice, that even the gods have the attribute of curiosity, they called upon the chief female dancer of Heaven to perform one of her least restrained dances. This induced great hilarity in the divine company, and the sounds of laughter resounded through Heaven. Amaterasu, within her cavern, heard the peals of merriment, and wondering what could inspire such joviality, when she, the queen of Heaven, were lacking, peeked from her cave. The gods—waiting this happy consummation—whisked her out and, with the aid of superb gifts, the sacred Mirror and a jeweled necklace,

induced her never to return to the dismal cave. As to Susa-no-wo—the gods cut off his hair, and plucked out his toe and finger nails and banished him from heaven, finally consigning him to the underworld where he remained. This entire myth—so reminiscent of many of the Indian solar myths, may well have been inspired by a solar eclipse.

Be this as it may, the earth was vouchsafed the light of Amaterasu, who remained high goddess of Earth—and it is she who is the progenetrix of the race of Yamato, for to her is traced the descent of the Imperial line of Japan, which has never changed in the history of the nation. Thus, Nippon perceives in its Emperor, a living evidence of that divine heredity which marks them a race apart, destined to pursue the Kami-no-Michi, the divine way.

Among the “eight hundred myriads of gods” which Shintoism has bestowed upon Nippon, first place is given to Amaterasu. These gods or Kami are infinite in their variety, ranking as gods of nature or deified individuals. Thus there are the Gods which represent a single manifestation of nature—the sun, or moon, or heavenly bodies. There are gods who preside over nature groups such as trees, or mountains or flowers or fields. Then, too, there are the gods which impower nature with certain characteristics, such as fertility. Similarly varied are the deified individuals, the clan gods and the gods of a divine human quality. And in the gods themselves, there is the quality of duality—each possesses a spiritual presence called the Mitama, which wanders at will; and frequently the

Mitama has two and even four aspects, the mild aspect called *Nigi-mi-tama* and the ominous and vengeful aspect, or *ara-mi-tama*. This Mitama is frequently to be found in the shrines of the gods, and inhabiting the *shintai* or symbolic object connected with each god and preserved in his shrine. Thus Amaterasu has, as her symbol, the Mirror—and the very Mirror given to her by the gods, veiled from mortal sight, is preserved in her chief shrine of Ise. Other gods chose a sword, or jewel or a scarf for their symbols.

Essentially, therefore, Shinto is a nature cult with the rites and ceremonials which salute the will of nature. Its early shrines, eschewing the elaborateness of great temples, often surrounded a woody grove, a waterfall, a rock or a mountain—wherein the presence of the nature entities could be visualized. No individual ritual or ceremonial pertained to Shinto—with a clap of his hand and a bow before her shrine, the spirit of the devotee addresses nature, which he loves and cherishes throughout the never-repeated evidences of her beauty. Actually, Shinto has no definite philosophic or moral system, although certain fundamental ideas are germane to its cult and are implied in its emphasis on purity. Individual ancestor worship was actually not in its original practices, although it reveres the Imperial Ancestors and its past heroes. But later, reaching Japan probably by way of China, family ancestor worship became a part of its cult as did later funeral and marriage ceremonials. In effect, Shinto is a kind of amalgam—which, flowing through the blood of Nippon, binds all its people in a sense of their common

kinship, and in the devotion to the grace of nature; and too, in an inner creative integrity and subtlety which is perhaps unique among the peoples of the world. Nitobe has said that Shinto is the "ensemble of the emotional elements of the Japanese nation." A Westerner, Mason, says of it that it "personalizes the oneness of all the divine spirit in the heavenly origin of creativeness, through Amaterasu." These definitions all indicate that Shinto is, in essence, the synthesis of the Japanese spirit—comprising its sense of loyalty, its filial consecration, its spirit of creation; because the nation which feels so keenly its destiny can regard no act of its national life as casual. And to this creative impetus, may be traced the numerous Japanese ceremonials and festivals of beauty and design, which give such artistic creative precedence and subtlety to the people of Yamato.

In the person of the Mikado, the cult of Shintoism recognizes the high priest of the nation, the great symbol of the divine descent of the race—as he is called, the divine grandson. For the Nipponese never forget that they alone, of all nations of earth, have had the one Imperial line through their entire history. In this signal protection, they perceive anew the evidence of the celestial ancestry of their Emperor and, through his august person, of the entire Japanese people. And for this reason, they prefer to call their land Nippon, the Land of the Rising Sun, the cradle-spot of Heaven's celestial Light. So intimate is the relationship between the Japanese government and the nation's consecration to divinity, that Shinto perceives them one in origin; and the term for government,



*matsuri-goto*, means "affairs pertaining to worship." And hence, upon the Mikado devolves the papal rôle of celebrant of the most august festivals, although he may delegate these powers to his functionaries. Custom and tradition has designated certain of these duties to special families, such as the Nakatomi family, the Imbe and the Urabe. The Emperor himself, however, performs the greatest festival of all, the Daijowe, which is celebrated on the eleventh month in the year of his ascension to the throne, when he offers the new rice and brewed beer to the heavenly forces in a festival of Thanksgiving and consecration for his reign.

In the Yengi-shiki is given the prayer for the great Harvest Festival when thanks is rendered to the sovereign gods of the Harvest for the rice:

"I declare in the presence of the sovereign gods of the Harvest, if the sovereign gods will bestow, in many-bundled spikes, the late-ripening harvest, which they will bestow, the late-ripening harvest (rice) which will be produced by the dripping of foam from the arms and the drawing of mud together between the thighs. Then I will fulfill their praises by presenting the first fruits in a thousand ears and in many hundred ears; raising high the beer-jars, feeling and ranging in rows the bellies of the beer jars; I will present in juice and in grain. As to things which grow in the great field plain—the sweet herbs and bitter herbs; as to things which dwell in the blue sea—plain things wide of fin and narrow of fin, down to the weeds of the offing and weeds of the shore; and as to clothes with bright cloth, glittering cloth, soft cloth and

coarse cloth will I fulfill their praises. And having fulfilled a white horse, a white boar, and a white cock and various kinds of things in the presence of the sovereign gods of the Harvest, I fulfill their praises by presenting the great offering of the Sovereign grandchild's Augustness." On this occasion, as is announced, the gods receive fruits, fish, beer, cloth and other offerings for their pains.

Outside of the Imperial rites were other festivals, lesser agricultural festivals, the lovely festivals of the community when the sensitive creative talent which marks the entire nation is translated into its consecration to the beautiful aspects of nature, its reverence to the past, or its tribute to a great hero of its history, such as the festivals to Prince Shotoku or the Meiji. Among its chief festivals are the semiannual festivals of purification, when a communal day of atonement is held, and when the impurities of the people are cleansed away. As has been said, "if Shinto has one dogma, it is purity"—and these lustrations of the people are deeply meaningful in the Shinto cult. These semiannual days of atonement were called Oho-Narahi, and were celebrated on the thirtieth day of the sixth and twelfth months. The high ceremony was held at the south gate of the Imperial palace, called the Gate of the Scarlet Bird. But the ceremony was also marked publicly throughout the country in all national shrines. There were several forms of its celebration but Karl Florenz in his "Ancient Japanese Rituals" tells us of one form of the ritual. A few days before the ceremonial, each man or woman who sought purification, received from the priest of the temple a paper cut somewhat to resemble the shirt

or upper part of the garment. Touching his body with this paper, and breathing upon it, the devotee wrote upon it his age and sex and returned it to the priest who deposited it upon a black table where it reposed with all the papers of other devotees, during the purification ceremony. After the ceremony, these papers were placed upon a boat and taken out and thrown in the water—a symbol of the purging away of all impurities.

For Shinto preaches a gospel of purity—but not necessarily the purity of asceticism, since it demands only moderation, not denial. It emphasizes the purity of the body, the purity of a man's intention, which permits him to turn back to his inner being, which Shinto holds to be essentially clean and undefiled. The impurities which were effaced by these lustration ceremonies were varied, generally connected with disease and uncleanness of the body. But Heaven also had transgressions such as those practiced by Susa-no-wo upon his sister. As the Ritual itself states, "Now, of the various faults and transgressions to be committed by the celestial race, destined more and more to people this land of his peaceful rule, some are of Heaven, to wit, the breaking down of divisions between rice fields, filling up of irrigation channels, removing water pipes, sowing seed over again, planting skewers, flaying alive, flaying backwards. These are distinguished as Heaven's offenses.

"Earthly offenses, which will be committed, are the cutting of living bodies, the cutting of dead bodies, leprosy, excrescences, incest of a man with his mother or daughter, with his mother-in-law or step-daughter, bes-

tiality, calamities from creeping things from the high gods and from high birds, killing animals and bewitchments.”

From this wide gamut of imperfections, it may be seen how flexible was the cult of Shinto; it demanded purity and left to a man's own conscience the test of his own code. Perhaps the great symbol of the Goddess Amaterasu—the Mirror—is the most significant indication of the implications of Shinto. Was it not into the mirror of his own spirit that man must look in order to effect his salvation? Thus, if Shinto did not prescribe a dogma, it nevertheless presumed that for the love of Emperor and Country—that blessed country of Yamato—a man would search his soul and cleanse it of its impurities.

It was this flexibility of Shintoism, which must be regarded as an inspiration rather than a pronouncement of creed, that permitted it to admit into its pattern the doctrines of Confucius and Buddha. These two Faiths made their way through China, into the Land of Yamato, there to be molded into a form uniquely adapted to the spirit of the Japanese people.

### BUDDHISM

Buddhism was first introduced to Nippon in the middle of the Sixth Century through the little kingdom of Petchke, in Southwest Korea. Threatened with invasion, this tiny kingdom hoped to secure the support of her larger neighbor Japan, and therefore sent to the Emperor many presents. Among these were included the Image of the Buddha Sakyamuni, in gold and copper. The Niponese took council as to whether they could admit this

new Image into their pantheon—all rejecting it, save the chief minister Soga, who was in favor of accepting the Buddhist figure, and setting it up in the Shrine of the gods. The Image was rejected from the national shrine but Soga was permitted to take the figure himself. The appearance of a pestilence shortly after this event, convinced the people that Heaven was displeased at the coming of the new Image and Soga's shrine was burnt and the Image destroyed. A quarter of a century later, an attempt to introduce Buddhism met with a similar result.

It was not until 586, when the House of Soga became a powerful force, that Buddhism was admitted into Nippon, under the Empress Suiko, when it came to be the religion of the land. The introduction of Buddhism to Nippon may be attributed to Prince Shotoku, nephew of the Empress and regent during her reign. In the history of Japan, this extraordinary figure of Prince Shotoku stands beside the Meiji Emperor as the symbol of radiant human attainment. His was a character of exquisite and lofty delineations, and his pure spirit accepted Buddhism, because in it he could discern no contradiction to the faith of his forebears. In answer to his father's inquiry, as to why he accepted Buddhism and how he could reconcile it with Shinto and Confucianism, he answered, "The three religions complement each other—Shinto bespeaks the past, Confucianism the present, and Buddhism the future. They are the root, the leaves, the flower of the one tree." Born in 574, Prince Shotoku was only nineteen when he became ruler and, as his first act, pronounced Buddhism the religion of the State. Perceiving religion and state-

hood as inevitably linked together, he applied the three principles of Buddhist faith to the life of the Nation. He established not only a central temple, for worship and the training of monks in arts and philosophies, but asylums, a hospital and dispensary as well; he began new agricultural reforms, and built roads and cities and encouraged new constructions. A brilliant administrator, the first decade of his reign was devoted to enhancing the happiness of his people. Then turning to the outside world, he instituted diplomatic relations with China, the great cultural center of the age, since he felt a kinship with China through their common belief in Buddhism.

To Prince Shotoku, Nippon has given the title of the father of its civilization, with ample cause. His entire life is the revelation of a spirit uniquely humble, yet reflecting great magnanimity, brilliance and superb creative gifts, that place him among the great rulers of all times. He was at once a teacher to his people, an example to them and the inspirer of much of their beauty. Dedicated completely to Buddhism, he preached its doctrine with noble eloquence; he raised shrines of Beauty in its name, and himself encouraged the creation of superb images which stand as evidence of a true creative genius. Understanding so deeply the need of international intercourse, he sent groups of students to China, then the cultural mecca of Asia. These studied the culture of China and brought back to their country the fruits of new creative ideas. Thus did Nippon live through a golden era under the rarest of Princes, a tolerant leader, a Prince of spirit and a creator of the beautiful. Throughout his entire life, the image of

the Blessed Buddha was constantly before him; and this devotion created a veritable nimbus about his person. The alchemy of his ideals transmuted the life of his people. The centuries have not dulled the memory of his achievement—and for the Buddhists of Japan, he takes rank as an Arhat striving along the path of Self-Perfection, towards the One.

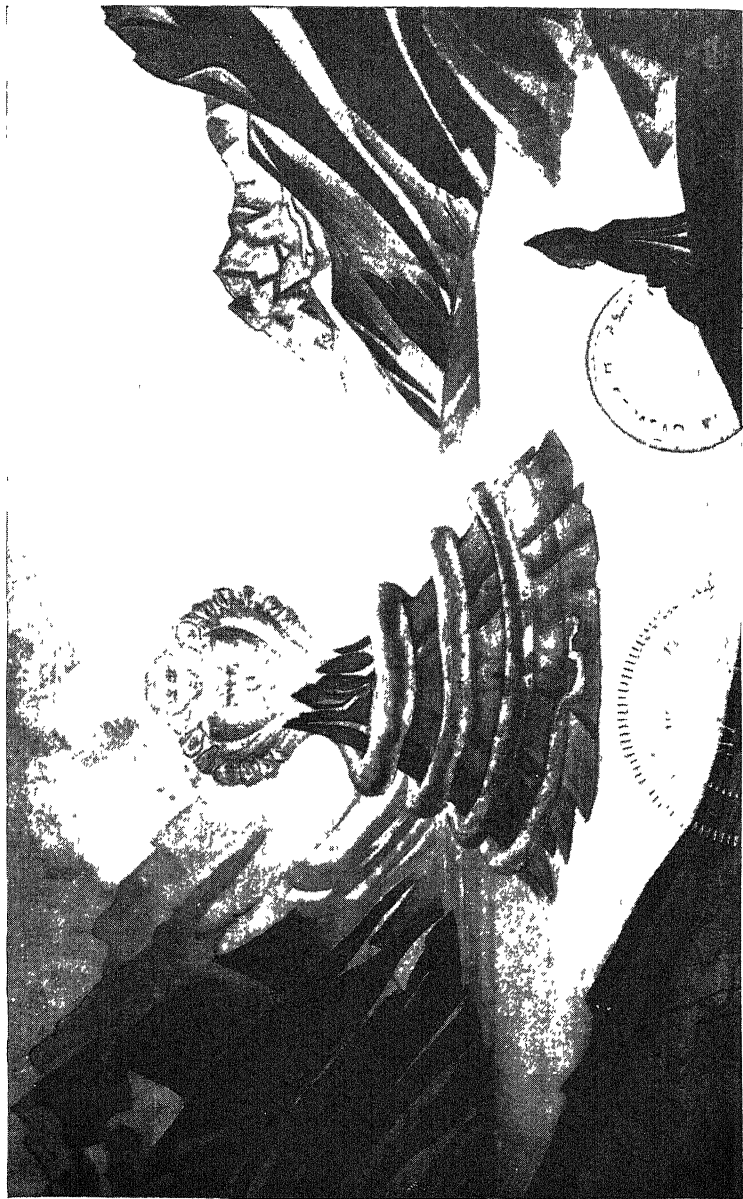
The first shrinking of Shinto from the acceptance of this new alien intrusion of Buddhism soon disappeared, for the flexible tenets of Shinto soon permitted it to assimilate this new teaching, and find in it a complement to its own faith. Since Shinto was an impulse rather than a direction itself, it could turn to Buddhism for a sense of the future, and for the system of philosophy and metaphysics which it lacked. Then, too, Shinto found it not hard to define the Buddha Lochan, as an aspect of its Sun Goddess Amaterasu. During the rise of the Nara Temple to Buddhism, the Shinto God of Eight Banners pronounced an oracular desire to pay tribute to the new shrine, and other gods showed similar good will and hospitality. Moreover, the intellectual convictions and beauties of Buddhism, so all-encompassing, essentially satisfied the Japanese mind and conquered the objections of Shinto, which borrowed from it many aspects of the creed and objective which it lacked. The two were readily reconciled, and the Shinto deities were perceived as earlier avatars or incarnations of the Buddhist illuminati—and in this union of the two faiths was born the Ryobu or dual doctrine which merged both teachings.

It is not necessary to enter into the story of the various

episodes of Buddhism in Japanese life or of the various Buddhist cults which successively entered and predominated in Nipponese life. Briefly one may but state, that the first Hinayana sects which entered from the south, later made way for the Kegon and Tendai Sects of Mahayana Buddhism, and the emphasis of the teaching was upon the Boddhisatva Maitreya. In the Twelfth Century the Jodo and Shingon sects with their predominant numbers of votaries gained ascendancy.

But it is the sect of Zen Buddhism that seems to come closest to the spirit of Nippon and which gave the impetus to a movement, which more than any other single factor, crystallizes the faith of Japan, the Samurai. In the Twelfth Century a monk, Yeisei, of the Huyeizen monastery, schooled in the Trepitaka, and feeling the need of a new extension of the Teaching, went to China to study, being then 28 years old. After some years he returned to his country and continued his work. But once again the desire came to him to return to China and in 1187 he again went there, this time coming in contact with the Zen Buddhism which he studied faithfully for four years, then returning to his native land and beginning the propagation of Zen. At first the destiny invariably encountered by a new teaching greeted Zen, but Yeisei's efforts prevailed and in 1206 the Emperor promoted him to the highest rank of priesthood in Kamakura. The great contribution however, to the establishment of Zen Buddhism was made by Dogen, a pupil of Yeisei's own disciple, who finally broke down all opposition and gave Japan the Buddhist system perhaps most close to its native heart.





NAGARJUNA, THE CONQUEROR OF THE SERPENT

From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich



Zen was believed by its followers to have been the system imparted personally by the Buddha to Maha Kasyapa his illumined disciple, who in turn transmitted it personally to Ananda. The system, carried on by words of mouth, passed from pupil to teacher through some of Buddhism's great exponents such as Nagarjuna, Asvagosha and others until it reached its twenty-eighth patriarch in Boddhi Dharma. The latter is said to have brought the system as a missionary to North China early in the Sixth Century. The system is most closely related to the system expounded by Nagarjuna and the Jnana Philosophy of Sankaracharya. In its process through China, Zen Buddhism had encountered Taoism and had acquired something of the esoteric concepts of Lao Tze.

To Nippon, Zen Buddhism was especially close. It emphasized simplicity, moral discipline and mental training, and demanded meditative introspection. Its austere and stoic demands on one's own development, seemed uniquely in keeping with the Japanese nature, bred on Shinto ideals of loyalty and of utter devotion and sacrifice to a force without. Moreover, Zen Buddhism came to Japan at a most opportune moment in her history. The conquests of the great Kublai Kahn were lending prestige to military classes through Asia, as men looked to them for protection against these daring Mongol conquerors; in Japan this new attitude was manifested in the rise of the Feudal system, parallel with the growing power of the House of Yoritomo and the establishment of the Shogunate or military leader. With the preponderance of this Shogun, there was established the warrior class, or the

Samurai, the knighthood of Japan. To these warriors, the austere outlook of Zen Buddhism made a deep appeal; in its tenets of self-control and meditation, they found a staff for their own objective. And it was the unique combination of religious zeal and the sense of utter patriotism and loyalty to their superior, that produced in Nippon the ideal of the Samurai, which has to a certain extent its counterpart in the crusading knight of mediaeval Europe. The impact of Zen Buddhism, with its touches of Confucianism and Taoism, and the vital memory of Shinto, gave rise to the Code of Bushido, the Way of the Knights of the Samurai.

#### THE SAMURAI AND THE CODE OF BUSHIDO

The Samurai, who come down to contemporary times as the symbol of utter devotion and loyalty, and of complete dedication to an ideal, were the avowed defenders of the weak. Above all, they pledged their loyalty to their master. They espoused complete indifference to death in the achievement of an honorable cause. The Code of Bushido was their credo and guide, and by it they determined their lives—a veritable Japanese version of the Knights of the Round Table, but with the principle of Loyalty and Patriotism furnishing the great motivations.

An austere rule of conduct guided the entire life and action of the Samurai—not only was he a warrior trained in the arts of defense; but, in addition, his every act had to be determined by the rules of chivalry and etiquette, as

prescribed by the Code of Bushido. It was his duty to cultivate the arts of peace. To this end, a thorough training in letters, in the arts, in music, were added to his studies in fencing, jiu-jitsu, horsemanship and archery. It was expected that he develop a sense of poise and gain the complete self-control, which would restrain him from the slightest breach of decorum or forgetfulness to the tenets of his code. Thus, as an example of the discipline of self, of the spirit of loyalty to Emperor and superior, of the model of friendship and human relationships, the Samurai became the symbol of knightly perfection to the entire people of Japan.

Lest the arts of peace be neglected, and in order that the Knights of Bushido should show to the nation the highest cultural development, each of the Great Samurai families were entrusted with the development and perfecting of one of the arts, of which they became the patrons. It is this emphasis upon the arts, not as a luxury, but as an essential of each cultivated human being, that has brought about the permeation of Nippon with the atmosphere of beauty, with the rare sensitiveness of the nation, and the grace for subtle details, that so often startles and amazes outsiders.

The Code of Bushido sums up this tenet of the Samurai, which came to be, in effect, the cult of the nation. As Nitobe tells us, Bushido means Military-knight-ways, and was the precept of knighthood, the *Noblesse Oblige* of the warrior class: "More frequently, it is a code unuttered and unwritten, possessing all the more, the powerful sanction of veritable deed, and of a law written upon the

fleshly tablets of the heart." To this unwritten code the various roots had made their contribution—Shinto had provided it with the great sense of utter loyalty to the divinely fathered sovereign and to all superiors; its sense of filial reverence, its devotion to the past and the belief in the essential goodness of the human heart. Confucianism gave it the ethical foundations and the belief in the five relationships which take precedence in man's life—subject to sovereign; father to son; brother to brother, husband to wife and friend to friend. Zen Buddhism gave it the capacity for calm, above the fluctuations of life; the principle of self-knowledge, of moral discipline and the sustenance of inner meditation. And the qualities which entered into the code of Bushido and established the accoutrements of the knights of Nippon were splendid—first came rectitude and justice, for no cause was fitting in which rectitude and justice were not the criteria—and the adornment of each Samurai was to be called a Gishi, a man of rectitude; for the perfect knight determined his acts on these basic principles alone. Second came courage—not reckless courage, but the valor of one who serves an unblemished cause with resourcefulness and unflinchingness—that "courage to live when it is right to live and to die when it is right to die." Together with these armaments the warrior must have also benevolence, the impulses of magnanimity, and charity—that "tenderness of the warrior" which fills the stories of many of Nippon's great heroes. Love of music, of art, of letters were essentials—because unlike the west, which often marks these qualities as "effeminate," to the Nipponese as to the

Greeks, no man was truly schooled until the sense of harmony and the essence of beauty lived in him, to modulate the stoicism of the warrior. Politeness, veracity, honor and the unswervable sense of loyalty were the inalienable marks of the Samurai.

In his consecration to the cult of self-discipline, the Samurai found an ideal in the Zen Buddhist monk. He sought constantly to emulate him in an inner fortification which came through self-privation; through courage; through complete composure. Like the monk, he hoped to steel himself to that dignity and solemnity of spirit, which can meet the impacts of the outer world without agitation, but with entire poise of being. Thus, the Samurai strove to be a combination of the dauntless warrior and the irreproachable man.

In a manner, the attitude of the Samurai towards his sword, symbolizes this balance of chivalry and valor. The sword was the constant companion of its master—his veritable soul—and was named the "Great Defender." Because it was meant to be the symbol not of aggression but of protection and honorable peace. Nor was it to be drawn from its sheath recklessly. However, once its master was attacked, the sword became veritably alive, unconquerable, defending its master to the end. To each Samurai, his sword was the true Excalibur and symbolized the embodiment of his knighthood. This devotion to the Sword even took on ritual significance and the occasions of the forging of swords, held at prescribed periods, became religious ceremonies, in which the great sword-masters attired themselves in priestly garments as though

performing a spiritual service. In this devotion of the Knight to his sword, Nippon has not been alone—it has been an inalienable aspect of all knighthood, a veritable cult in which the Heroes of Walhalla and of the Round Table, have been fellow-worshippers of the Samurai.

From the beginning of the cult of Bushido, the Samurai rises as the ideal of Nippon—the synthesis of chivalry, of self-control, of loyalty and of an inner cultivation. His life is the example to youth as to all men of Japan, and from their earliest years, the parents imparted to their children, as their model, the self-control of the warrior-knight. Courage was the goal, even of the nursery, and the heroic deeds of the Samurai and their dauntless valor filled the wonder-tales which the children heard from their cradles. Among no people is the love for childhood more beautifully evidenced than in Japan and for generations this sensitive relation between the Japanese and their children has won acclaim. Nevertheless, feeling the need of emphasizing even among the youngest children the goal of self-discipline, the parents would set them to perform almost Spartan tasks. Love was poured out to their children, but not indulgence. Their endurance was fortified by special duties and even privations. And their resourcefulness was tested by difficult errands and missions. Sometimes, in special festivals to a god of learning, the children were brought together to spend the entire night in reading aloud to each other, and being compelled to fight off even sleep. In emulation of the Samurai, in countless ways, parents gave their children a sense of



fortitude to resist hunger, cold and prepared them to face most difficult and even gruesome experiences, unmoved.

For the symbol of the Samurai, Japan has chosen the cherry-blossom, because its petal is unblemished—and the life of the Samurai must be unblemished as the blossom. Then, too, the cherry blossom flies away the instant it has bloomed—it never withers—thus unwithering, must be the life of the Samurai. Motoori, one of the great exponents of Shinto, has written a stanza which is deeply moving to all Nipponese:

“Isles of blest Japan—  
Should your Yamato spirit  
Strangers seek to span,  
Say: Scenting morn’s sun-lit air,  
Blows the cherry wild and fair.”

When to continue to live honorably is impossible, death is preferable, was the tenet of Bushido. And to escape the life-dishonorable, the Sepukku (often termed Hara Kiri) was introduced as a form of suicide, through the opening of the bowels. But Sepukku was not to be taken lightly—the Samurai was permitted to take his life not as an escape from duty, but only when it was a duty to die. Like the cherry-blossom, a Samurai could not live on, when a blemish threatened his honor; life for him must never wither. A Samurai was trained, therefore, in the awesome technique of Sepukku, which had to be performed also with grace and solemnity—with that same grace which exalted the great Socrates as he bade farewell to his pupils. Courage, self-control, coupled with finesse

and aestheticism—thus, was the balance prescribed by the Bushido.

Sepukku, more familiarly known as Hara Kiri, was introduced in Japan in the Fourteenth Century, and was the mode of suicide accepted by Bushido when the knight warrior had no alternative except to die. The entire method of Sepukku was prescribed with the punctilious precision that surrounded all other acts of the Samurai. Because, in death as in life, the Samurai was to maintain to his last moment, the great balance and control which marked the man of chivalry. At times, as with General Nogi, a Samurai committed Hara Kiri, when he felt that the purpose of life had vanished, and to mark before the world the ideal of his consecration. At times, Hara Kiri was the mode of expiation permitted the Samurai when he had committed a breach against a code of prevailing custom, or when he had failed in a mission of honor or been defeated in battle.

The method of Sepukku was elected because the ancient Japanese as the ancient Hebrews, Greeks and others, believed that the seat of man's soul was below the abdomen. The unique psychic sensitiveness of the centers around the navel gave rise to this belief, which probably could be identified with the Hindu belief of the solar plexus as a center of psychic import.

The purpose of Sepukku was not regarded as a swift passage to death or a release from life—it was meant to represent the deliberate and cool act of a man, who is fully aware of the purposes of his deed and who commits it with complete calm and determination.

Sepukku demanded that a man perform his final immolation in the presence of certain witnesses; also that he have seconds who were fully equipped in military arts, since they too had a share in the condemned man's final sacrifice. Special mats were set out in a prescribed manner for the ceremony. The condemned man was garbed in his white ceremonial attire with winged sleeves of hempen cloth. With great dignity and solemnity, but with no mark of any inner uneasiness, he would enter the room and bow to his seconds and witnesses. He would then strip himself to the waist—kneeling in such a position that as he fell, he would fall forward, not backwards. Then taking the dirk, nine-and-a-half inches long, which was proffered to him by his second, he would calmly stab himself in the left side below the navel, then draw the knife across to the right side, in full composure and with no single outcry. Then as he leaned forward, it was the duty of his second, with equal composure, to sever the head from the body.

The act of Sepukku among the Samurai was regarded as imperative, as an expiation for a wrong. And so the Samurai was called the two-sworded man, because he carried into battle two swords—the long one for his enemy, and the short dirk for himself. Because to each Samurai self-immolation was preferred to the disgrace of defeat; the cherry blossom of life must be wafted away, before it remain blemished.

Through the six centuries when the Samurai maintained their prestige and, coming down to the rein of the Meiji in 1868, when the Shogunate was abolished, the stories

of the heroism of the Samurai are legion. Their constant self-sacrifice for loyalty, for love of Emperor and country constitute the epic of Nippon. Most famous of all, is perhaps the story of the Forty-Seven Ronin; this story lives on in the heart of Japan as an active symbol of the ideals of the Samurai and how their spirit permeates all life. Since loyalty to one's master was the major rule of Bushido, these Forty-Seven Ronins or "masterless men," who remained faithful to their departed superior and who died to defend his honor, has won the sympathy of generations. In the year 1700, Asano Takumi no Kami, one of the feudal princes of moderate means, was informed that he would have the honor of receiving an envoy of the Shogun. In order that he be tutored in all the fitting ceremonies for the occasion, an officer of the Shogun, Kira Kotsuke no Suke was appointed to instruct him. Resentful because Asano's steward had not proffered him a sufficiently generous gift, Kira, reputed to be a most mercenary man, subjected Asano to constant humiliations. Asano, with utmost restraint, accepted all the humiliations without complaint, but on the final day, Kira taunted his pupil, assailing him as a boor. Asano, unable to control himself any longer, drew his sword and wounded Kira. Notwithstanding the instigation for Asano's act and the general dislike in which Kira was held, the prince had committed a heinous offense in drawing his sword in the palace and in wounding a high officer of the Shogun. He was therefore commanded to commit suicide in retribution for his crime. For it was the custom to permit a man of

honor this act of self-immolation, thus sparing him the ignominy of being punished by others. Bravely accepting his destiny, Asano took his life by Sepukku, and in accordance with tradition his fief became forfeit.

In his service Asano had forty-seven retainers deeply loyal to their liege lord. Death did not release them from their fealty, and under the leadership of the chief councillor of Asano, Oishi Kuranosuke, they formed a league pledging themselves to devote their lives to avenging the death of their master. Their vowed enemy, Kira, was shrewd, however, and he vigilantly maintained about him a constant guard, thus frustrating their efforts at revenge. In order therefore, to effect their purpose, the Ronins determined to separate. Disguising themselves, they entered the service of other men—some became carpenters and artisans, thus on occasion visiting as workmen the house of Kira and studying the means by which they might some day effect their vow. Their leader, Oishi, in whose heart, the burning image of his master constantly endured, determined to disarm the foe completely. Leaving his home, he began to frequent the most disreputable houses, and to all outer appearance became an unredeemable profligate, deserting even his family for his shameless and dissolute life. Kira, hearing of the complete disintegration of Asano's retainers, and knowing of the debauchery of their leader, gradually relaxed his vigilance.

Finally convinced that the moment of their revenge had come, one winter night in 1702, the forty-seven men assembled and in an attack, planned with the greatest foresight, entered the home of Kira, defeating his guards.

Finally facing Kira himself, Oishi, bending his knees before his superior officer, reminded him of his offense to Asano, and gave him the privilege of suicide. Kira tremblingly refused, and the Ronin thereupon killed him. First bringing the head of the enemy to the grave of their lord, they then gave themselves up, prepared to follow their master in death. Despite the admiration which their deed aroused, tradition prevailed and the forty-seven Ronin were commanded to commit suicide and followed each other in death. Buried near their master, the site of their graves has become a veritable shrine. A forty-eighth grave is also there—and Mitford in his "Tales of Old Japan" tells the story of this newcomer. During the years when Oishi had led his disreputable existence, seemingly forgetting the wrong done to his lord, a man from Satsume one day, seeing him drunk, came up to him and spat in his face, taunting him with disloyalty to the faith of the Samurai and his master. Just after the death of the Ronins, one day a man appeared before the grave of Oishi, and in its presence declared himself to have been the man of Satsume. "Because I wronged you in your moment of difficulty, I hereby bring contrition to your memory"—thus, addressing the departed Samurai, the man of Satsume followed Oishi's example and took his life by Sepukku. And in deference to his act of honor, he too, has lain among these noble forty-seven who remain among the great heroes of Japan. And Japan also remembers the poem inscribed by the leader of the Forty-seven Ronin, Oishi Yoshio, before his final sacrifice to his master:

"We have cast our lives away  
Cherished longings are fulfilled  
Floating clouds no longer lie  
O'er our hearts serene and still."

Nor need we turn back to the Eighteenth Century to perceive this stoic faith in its vivid reality. An equally vivid sense of unalterable purpose lives in contemporary Nippon, and lifts each individual above a personal life to a sense of his rôle as a servant of the nation, and to his duty to the common cause. Two comparatively recent incidents come to one's mind—one an episode in the Japanese army, when it was necessary to destroy a barbed wire barrier of the enemy. Among many volunteers for the dread duty, three men were chosen; these readily lashed themselves with sticks of dynamite, stole up to the enemy's barrage, and as unflinchingly set fire to the sticks of dynamite, which they knew would scatter them to eternity.

The other incident, reported in the American press but one year ago, related to the capture of a group of Americans and Japanese by a band of bandits in Manchuria. Hotly pursued by rescuers the bandits hid their captives in a wooded grove. Then covering their captives with guns, they threatened them with instant death if they would utter one cry while the rescuers were in hearing distance. The sounds of the rescuing party came closer—and would have inevitably passed them in their deep retreat. But, despite the inevitable death which faced him, the captured Japanese ignored the muzzles of the bandit

guns and shouted out to the rescuing party, attracting them to the secluded spot and saving his comrades. He himself, instantly shot, while he lay dying, took a piece of paper on which he wrote: "I am a worshipper of the Boddhisatva Kōmpira and a Buddhist. You owe your life to her alone. When you return, go to her temple and thank her." This grace of dying for another, this impersonality are inherent in Zen and the code of Bushido—and the evidence of its ever vital-influence in Japan is disclosed daily in the acts of men, to whom the Samurai remains a living ideal.

Nor is it possible to overlook that other aspect of Bushido, which, in truth, is an inalienable part of the cult of Japan—the cult of beauty. For in Japan, as perhaps only in Greece before her, art and religion are inseparably united—and in the daily ritual of life, in the festivals of the seasons, in the rice sowing, in the ceremonials to its great heroes, Prince Shotoku and the Meiji, beauty walks among the people of Yamato. This beauty must be recognized as an essential of her faith. In its arts, its poetry, as in the code of the Samurai, restraint combined with beauty has been the ideal. Hence Japanese art weds economy of form with exquisiteness of meaning, thus placing the creative artist also in the rank of celebrants of a religious rite. In its flower arrangements or in its tea ceremony, life and spiritual experience have molded together patterns of sheer loveliness.



## "TEAISM"—ART AND RELIGION

Let us for instance, pause to consider the "Teaism" of Japan, the Tea-ceremony, which has its spiritual implications so deeply rooted in the national cult. No folkway of the West has a parallel for this fragment of spiritual articulation in the very midst of daily life. Hence it is difficult for us to understand the imagery of this graceful and thoughtful ceremony. But to the Japanese, the tea ceremony is the touch of magic in an every-day world: The pause which carries the spirit into sudden cool groves of fantasy; which lifts up life's curtain into a calm realm of ineffable loveliness. It is a reminder to the spirit that above earth exists the invisible plain of the spirit, that homeland of the heart. It is to the Monk Yeisei, the initiator of Zen Buddhism, that Japan also attributes the introduction of tea from China into Japan. But to the Zen Buddhist and the Samurai, the drinking of tea was not a casual or social idling of the time, but a moment of pause and inner contemplation. Tea was regarded as a calming beverage taken by the monks during the rituals. The Tea-ceremony itself originated in the act of the Zen monks who drank their tea from a bowl before the image of the Bodhi Darma. And this reverent votive gesture inspired the Tea-ceremony among the lay people.

Surrounded with grace, the ceremony was brought to an exquisite perfection by the great tea-masters. The Tea-ceremony, as so exquisitely explained by Okakura, in his "Book of Tea," was held either in a separate specially built tea-house or in a part of the living room of a dwell-

ing screened off for the tea-ceremony. There was subtle reasoning in holding the tea-ceremony in a place especially consecrated to this act for it was expected to represent to those who took part, a sanctuary, a dwelling of fancy—a spot removed from the world of daily habit. No aspect of the tea room and its arrangement was accidental—a strictly prescribed ritual, following the passages of the Buddhist scriptures, was followed. Thus, it was prescribed that the size of the tea room was to be four-and-a-half mats, or ten foot square. And in this proportion, was a reminder that a passage of the Sutra of Vikramadytia related that Manjushri welcomed 84,000 disciples of Buddha, even within the confines of such a room.

Outside of the tea room a path was laid called the Roji, which of itself had deep significance. This path was meant to be the bridge of transition from the mood of daily life to the inner calm of the tea room. And its startling beauty was intended to cast a mellowing influence over the spirit. As Ryoku, the greatest tea-master of Japan, in the Sixteenth Century, described it, this path had its origin in a line of the Buddhist Lotus Sutra, which says that "escaping from the fire-stricken habitations of the three phenomenal worlds, they take their seats in dewy ground." Thus, like devotees escaping from the sullyng life of earth, the celebrants of the tea-ceremony would pass along this path, transported into the exhilaration of an aesthetic experience. The greatest creative aspiration went into the making of the Roji, so that its beauty would completely envelope one. It was to suggest serenity as well as humility, and combine the rapture and

anguish of an unforgettable memory. As another of the great tea-masters has conceived it, the image of the path should suggest,

“A cluster of summer trees  
A bit of sea  
A pale evening moon.”

The guests would pass along this Path, and approach the tea house, as though entering a communion of the spirit. The door to the tea room was built low, generally not more than three feet high—because those who entered were expected to bend low, as an act of humility. If the guest was a Samurai, he would leave his sword upon a rack outside the tea house, because within that Abode of Fancy, there could be only the thought of peace. As they entered into the simplicity of the tea room, the guests would see a superb arrangement of flowers, a hanging scroll or poem. This arrangement they knew had been made with the greatest consecration and care, for this single occasion only. It was meant to express the synthesis of that moment and to surround the ceremony with its aesthetic mood. After paying tribute to the arrangement of flower and scroll the guests would take their places in silence, and when all were seated, the host would enter, and sit among them. Then they waited, still silent, for the boiling of the water. Kettle and iron were arranged with such dexterity among the tea-masters, that the sound of the boiling water resembled the murmur of a distant waterfall, the play of the running stream, of some other suggestion of the remembered notes of nature. And in this serene quiet, permeated with the imagery of beauty

and inner contemplation, the tea was drunk and the meal served. The guest, after partaking of a harmonious and uplifting communion, would depart refreshed, having glimpsed a calm island away from the welter of a world of care.

The tea-ceremony, or Cha-no-yu, as it is called, is not to be regarded as a casual social nicety. As Sadler says, "Teaism is the religion of daily life in Japan, since it combines the essence of Zen, Poetry and Bushido." To a people so sensitive to beauty as the Japanese, aesthetic experiences provide the way of faith. As a nation, Japan understands deeply the mystic experiences of beauty; hence it surrounds these ceremonials with a discipline and serenity that transmute them into a religious rite. Thus, in a contemplation of the philosophy of Japan, the cult of aestheticism takes its significant place as the actual religion of everyday life in Nippon.

It would be difficult to estimate the great influence which Teaism has had in Japanese culture. The concern of the tea celebrants to refine and sensitize everything surrounding this rite brought into life new movements in art, in painting, in pottery, in flower arrangements—thus affecting all life with the conscious realization of beauty as a way to heaven.

From this same point of view, it would be impossible to think of the religious life of Nippon, and not to consider her poetry, however briefly. For like the tea-ceremony, poetry is held to be an experience of the spirit, which may not be casual but must be a consciously disciplined episode in the inner life, both of poet and reader.

Thus, as with the tea-ceremony, forms were prescribed in poetry, demanding the elimination of everything unessential, aiming to the expression of sheer beauty, which would be as unblemished as the blossom of the cherry.

Thus, Nippon treasures among the first four books of her written records, her only indigenous scriptures, the Manyo-Shiu, the Book of Poems inscribed about the late Eighth Century. It is hard to believe that the following verses were written no less than a thousand years ago:

### THE DROUGHT

From ev'ry quarter of the vast domain  
Earth's whole expanse o'er which the sov'reign reigns  
From out the clank of horses' hoofs resounds,  
Far as the junks seek ocean's utmost bounds,  
Ten thousand off'rings, as in days of yore,  
Still to this day sheer varied treasures pour,  
Into the Imperial coffers: but of all  
The bearded rice is chief and principal;  
But now alas! The fields are tilled in vain;  
Day follows day, and still no shower of rain  
Morn after morn each thirsty blade droops down,  
And ev'ry garden tint is changed to brown,  
While I, heart-stricken, on the prospect gaze,  
And as the infant that his hands doth raise,  
To clutch his mother's breast, so to the heaven,  
I lift mine eyes to pray that rain be given  
Oh! may the cloud whose fleecy form is seen  
To rest yon distant mountain-peaks between  
Wafted across to where the ocean God  
Makes in the foaming waves, his dread abode  
Meet with the vapors of the wat'ry plain  
Then here returning, fall as grateful rain.

Yakamochi

## SONG ON ASCENDING MT. MISAKA

Oft in the misty spring,  
The vapors roll o'er Mt. Misaka's crest  
While pausing not to rest  
The birds each morn with plaintive note do sing,  
Like to the mists of spring  
My heart is rent; for like the song of birds  
Still all unanswered ring  
The tender accents of my passionate words.  
I call her every day  
Till daylight fades away  
I call her every night  
Till dawn restores the light  
But my fond prayers are all too weak to bring  
My darling back to sight.

Or the following lines to a Friend:

Japan is not a land where man need pray  
For 'tis itself divine;  
Yet do I lift my voice in prayer and say  
May every joy be thine  
And may I too, if thou those joys attain,  
Live on to see thee blest  
Such the fond prayer that like the restless man  
Will rise within my breast.

It is in the famed *Hakku*, limited to seventeen syllables, or in the *Tanka*, limited to thirty-one syllables that the loveliness of Japanese poetic concept is perceived at its best.

Nippon has always considered that in art there must be the sense of discipline and self-control, even as in Zen Buddhism. The entire artistic creation of Japan irradiates this subtlety of expression. The implication, as with the Samurai, or the Zen monk, is that the artist, too, is to be

guided by constant inner discipline and control. Hence the art of Japan in all its intriguing suggestion, aimed to be but the outer brief glimpse into an endless inner adventure. In poetry, it is the Hakku verse which bespeaks this great discipline of technique, coupled with a deep well of suggestion. The Hakku was a three-lined verse which was to contain only seventeen syllables—the first and third lines five syllables each and the middle line seven. It was to be a poem of nature and of a season, and its implication was a mood which could capture some universal and exquisite limning of an experience in the glory of nature. The form of verse was founded by Moritake, high priest of the Shinto shrine to Amaterasu at Ise—and the great masters of Hakku who followed him regarded their work in the light of a spiritual exercise. The Hakku form provided the creator with an exercise in discipline; and the results have been some of Nippon's most exquisite poetic fragments which catch and forever impress the fleeting yearnings of the soul:

To Basho, the great master of Hakku verse, are accredited some of the most superb of these creative blossoms as fragrant and unblemished as the petal of a plum blossom:

“On the mountain road the sun arose  
Suddenly in the fragrance of plum flowers.”

What could more fully express all the ecstasy of dawn in spring !or the melancholy of dying day, in this most famous of Basho's Hakku verses:

“On a withered branch  
A crow is sitting  
This autumn eve.”

That indescribable yearning in the wooded silence has been caught forever in Basho's lines:

"An ancient pond  
A frog leaps in—  
The sound of the water!"

The silence made more awesome, more ancient by the sudden splash.

Two other great Hakku writers must be quoted—the founder of this form Moritake, and Buson, who also founded a school of Hakku verse.

Moritake thus catches the vision of the butterfly, so beloved by Japan and so symbolic of spring time:

"A fallen flower flew back to the branch  
Behold, it was a fitting butterfly."

And, as his death verse this priest, in the custom of Japan for a poet or priest to write a verse synthesizing his life, inscribed:

"Alas my lifetime may appear  
A morning-glory's hour today."

And finally, Buson's:

"How cool the boom of the great Temple bell  
Dying away in the distance."

Pausing over the poetry of Nippon, let us remember with gratitude that the artists of Japan and her poets were regarded with utmost veneration. Nor did the greatest of her patriots and heroes disdain the creative word. As the great Shotoku has left to posterity the exquisite votive



sculptures ascribed to his own hand, the great Meiji also has shown that beauty dwelt with him, and that he did not fear to reveal the deep sentiment of the poet, which lived in him. I quote two poems translated by Komei and among those written by the Emperor:

#### THE BUTTERFLY

Long glowing miles of flowers in bloom  
Whose fragrant petals all enchant thee  
Woo endlessly my longing soul  
To flutter on from bud to blossom!  
Thou too my dainty butterfly,  
By passion martyred, chase new Beauty,  
Nor ever sink to soothing sleep  
Nor wrap a child-like dream about thee.

#### THE HERMIT

How shall I govern my people?  
Gladly I'd take the advice  
Of the humblest man in my realms  
Of the loneliest hermit hid  
In the remotest recess  
Of a mountain yet unexplored.

Thus with Japan, as perhaps with no other nation, the aesthetic experience and the religious experience are regarded as one. And those who would adventure into the spiritual subtleties of the Land of Yamato, must study the diversity of her artistic and creative expressions. In the brief glimpse here given of them may be found a clue to the art of Nippon as another note in the symphony of her unique religious pattern, in which the dominating key is still the love of Emperor. For, in a manner, all

roads of faith in Japan blend in that common consecration, the love of Emperor and Country. With other countries, patriotism is a sentiment, with Japan it is a religion. To Nippon, the ruler is not alone a secular head, he remains as the living evidence of that age-old covenant between Heaven and the People of the Rising Sun. In his person, beyond that of any living ruler, is epitomized the identity of the secular and religious leadership of his people. He is, at once, pope and king. In 1868, with the ascension of the Emperor Mitsuhiro, who lives in the memory of his people as the Meiji—the reign of Enlightened Government—the devotion to the Mikado gained new luminosity. Abolishing the system of the Prime Minister or Shogunate, the Emperor also restored to new significance the faith of Shintoism, as the religion of the state and the native faith of ancient Nippon. Resounding once again the note of worship to the Imperial Ancestors and the Gods, the institution of Shinto as a national religion assumed first place in the Meiji's rule, and the department of divine rites outranked in prestige all other departments.

And, as the living representative of heaven on earth, the Mikado outranks for Japan all other objects of its devotion. In this belief, Nippon is fortified by the circumstance that she alone of all nations, can trace an unbroken line of Emperors of the one dynasty back to times beyond memory. And Nippon, remembering her Emperor, never forgets that rock of ages, the tradition on which Japan reaffirms its ancient faith, that Amaterasu, bidding her own grandchild go forth to govern the Land of the

Rising Sun, presented him with the triple regalia—her Mirror, a Sword and a Jewel, with these words,

“My child when thou lookest on this mirror let it be as if thou wert looking on me. Let it go with thee on thy couch and in thy hall and let it be to thee a holy mirror. This Land is the region of which my descendants shall be Lords. Do thou, my august grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go, and may prosperity attend thy dynasty and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure forever.”

And so long as the Emperor endures, the people of Nippon perceive that the covenant of Amaterasu, that universal mother of heaven, with her beloved children on earth still prevails. Thus, Shintoism still lives unwithered in the heart of Japan. Beneath the outer mantle of modernism, the people of Yamato ever refresh themselves at the springs of her national life—the selfless, impersonal loyalty of Shintoism, the stoic self-discipline of the Samurai. And with each renewed spring, so long as Japan will behold the unblemished blossom of the cherry as it floats out on the breeze into the unknown, it will renew its faith to the Code of Bushido, which lives on like the wafting fragrance, above the spirit of Yamato, the Land of the Rising Sun.



IRAN

ZARATHUSTRA

MANICHAISM

THE SUFI MYSTICS OF ISLAM



## IV

### IRAN

#### ZARATHUSTRA

**I**N the fortieth year of his life, Zarathustra, the flaming prophet of Iran, out of the inexpressible despair of his heart, turned his eyes towards the supreme father of his revelations, Ahura Mazda, God of Light, and uttered the prayer of his solitude:

“To what land shall I go to flee? Whither to flee? Noble and peer turn from me; nor do the people accept me, nor the lying rulers of the land. How am I to please thee, O Mazda Ahura!

“I know wherefore I am without success. I am a poor man and have few followers. I cry unto thee, O Ahura Mazda, give me thy succor, as friend to friend! Teach me, by the Right the acquisition of Good Thought.

“When, O Mazda, shall the dawn of the world’s redemption come through Thy Teachings of Deliverance? Where are they, to whose help the teachings may be brought? I place my trust in Thee, O Ahura, that Thou Thyself will enable me to fulfill Thy command.”

For ten years, the Revelation of Truth had burned within Zarathustra as a torch; had driven him, a Passionate Pilgrim, over the breadth of Iran, proclaiming to men the word of God. And despite the long years, he remained still alone without a convert, his words falling sterile upon the stony hearts of men. As in the manner of his

Magian forebears, Zarathustra stood upon the summit of a mountain, even as Moses had done, and called out into the silences his bitterness at the barren decade behind him. Yet, even as he despaired, looking up into the heavens, he beheld the sun—effulgent, glorious, incorruptible—shedding its inexhaustible warmth upon all men alike without thought of return. And at sight of this symbol of the God of Light, ever pouring out His Benignity to men, courage again arose in His servant and once more Zarathustra set out over the spaces of his native land.

For, to the Prophet of Iran—as perhaps to all men and all prophets—the supreme despair came as a trial even in the very darkest twilight hour before his triumph. Because, the next year, the eleventh after his revelation brought to Zarathustra the first sign of success, with the conversion of his cousin, Metyomah. Ten years earlier, Zarathustra had beheld Metyomah in a vision, in which his cousin was leading a vast army to victory in the name of truth. Thus with the conversion of this first disciple and convinced that the vision would be fulfilled, Zarathustra the Righteous joyfully began his ministry, with Metyomah as the beloved companion of his teaching.

To understand this fervent ministrant of Truth—Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, as he is more familiarly known—as well as to understand his doctrine of salvation, we must look back upon his epoch and the people to whom he brought his ministry. The way leads us back once more to the plateaux of Central Asia beyond the Hindu Kush, where the Aryan progenitors of India and Iran dwelt as one people. The same wave of unrest which sped certain



of the Aryan tribes down over the passes into the Punjab and across the Hindu strand, also impelled the stream of Aryans to turn towards Media and Persia. Here they dwelt as Iranians, remembering the common gods of their fathers, but reinvesting them with new qualities, as nature itself had charged the Iranians with the new necessities and new vistas of their life's labors.

In the history of racial movements and the evolution of nations, one of the most intriguing themes is the spiritual and intellectual mutations of a root race against the impacts of various aspects of nature. The same clay molds into innumerable forms. Thus, as the Indo-Aryans, in the benign and bounteous nature of Hindustan, found their spiritual expressions in meditation and asceticism, so in Iran, their Aryan kin wrestled with a stubborn and austere earth and hence perceived labor as the apotheosis of life and as their exalted offering to the Lord. And religion to them became a militant crusade against the dark opponents of the spirit, as life itself was a pioneer effort and combat against the recalcitrant forces of the earth.

The early history of the Irans has revealed to us no definite fathers of the race, such as were the Rishis of India, who might have set down into the records of time their own revelations and invocations to the higher forces, like the Vedas. Had they done so, we may have had a still more illuminating story of the variations upon the one theme of the Aryan pantheon. But through the veil of these early unrecorded years, one nevertheless catches the glimpses of the religious foundations of Iran, with the fragments of the common origin which unite them with

India. Out of the familiar early pantheon, known to us through the Vedas, in Iran one god-head rises above all others, the figure of Mithra who so often was coupled in the Vedic hymns with Varuna. The multifarious deific hosts of the Vedas ultimately receded in Iran to give first place to this Mithraic force, whose attributes and function are as all-powerful as Indra. Nor does the name of Mithra disappear even after the coming of Zoroaster, for Mithra becomes a special bearer of Ahura Mazda's force of fire and the protector of wide pastures. And in a special cult, rising in later generations and practicing the Mithraic mysteries, this God held an enduring sway in lands even beyond Iran.

In the Yashts of the Avesta, the Zoroastrian testament, we find such apostrophic Hymns to Mithra as:

"We sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures—He who is sleepless and ever-awake. Whose renown is beneficent, whose aspect is beneficent, whose glory is beneficent; who has boons to give at his will; who has pasture-fields to give at his will; harmless to the tiller of the ground; beneficent; he of the thousands of watchers, the powerful, all-knowing undeceivable God."

One is reminded of David's address to the Lord, his Shepherd, Who never slumbers!

Another name which appears in early Iranian worship is that of Yima, the first man, and the ruler of the nether-world, and reminiscent of the Yama of India. A cosmogonical belief similar to the divine order of Rita of the Vedas, also pertained in Iran with Asha as the bearer of the reins of earth. The divine nectar is another of the most

important aspects of the religion and religious ritual of early Persia—and *haomo* is the same all-powerful draught used in their ecstasies and absolutions, as was the potent *soma* of the Vedic forefathers of India. Undoubtedly the slight change in the name does not hide the common origin and purpose of this ambrosial drink, which is said to have been made from the ephedrin plant, and which was so effective for gods and man.

By the time of Zarathustra's appearance, already the forces of perversion had set in, heresy and magic were rampant, and the prophet of Iran saw himself as one ordained by the Hierarch Ahura Mazda to bring light to his people, and to impress upon them the need of a life of responsibility.

As with the lives of all carriers of the truth, subsequent generations have veiled the facts of Zarathustra's days in legends and traditional fantasy. But no longer is there any doubt as to the historicity of this prophet, who ranks, in fervent devotion to his God as well as in the flaming conviction of his message, with the greatest prophets of all times. The dates given for his birth strangely varied—ranging from the extravagant estimates of the classic writers who place him about 6000 B. C. Modern authoritative estimates set it now as 660 B. C., again within the scope of the Mystic Century. Numerous districts in Iran covet the honor of his birth, and pronounce their claims to this distinction; most probable is it that he was born in the vicinity of Lake Urmia, west of Media in Adarba-jian.

In the scriptures of Zoroastrianism, the Avesta, we find

the verses telling of the heavenly forecasts of the prophet's birth. And according to the apocryphal writings of Iran, thrice were annunciations given as to the coming birth of this vessel of divinity who would rout the forces of evil. Thus, in primeval times, the Mythical Bull, who appears in ancient traditions of Iran as a prophetic force and a symbol of Nature, discerned the spiritual body or *Fravasi* of the future herdsman-prophet. Again in the Golden Age of Persia, in the rule of the blessed Jemshid, it is said that this sovereign-seer warned the demoniac forces to beware, since the time would come for their annihilation, through the birth of a manchild who would tame their fury. Finally, three centuries before the appearance of the Prophet, we are told that again an ox was given speech for a brief moment to announce that the future glory of the prophet Zarathustra was ordained. Thus were the annunciations given.

But the investment of the anointed spirit in an earthly body, according to the Iranian teachings, is also fraught with great mystery. And hence, for the Iranians utter consecration surrounds the birth of this Magian teacher, as it surrounded the birth of the babe in Galilee. In accordance with Zoroastrian tradition, the Divine Glory—that Holy Spirit which dwells with the ordained prophet during his earthly passage—is handed down along the celestial hierarchy until it is deposited into the being of the elected one. Ahura Mazda Himself begot this Divine Glory which was to be the investiture of Zarathustra. From Him, the highest, it passed along the great chain of heavenly beings through heaven and down to earth into the very

home of her who was destined to be the prophet's mother. From girlhood, this divine glory was part of her being, awaiting the coming conception, and it cast about her a glow which awed all who saw her. Her father, fearing that she was bewitched, sent her to the village on Lake Urmia and there she married a farmer and shepherd of noble ancestry, Porushaspo. One day as he was attending his cattle in the fields, Porushaspo saw approaching him two radiant figures, who told him they were the arch-angels Vohuman and Ashavahisht. They presented to him a branch of the homa, sacred plant of Iran, and told him to bring it to his home and to give it to his wife for it bore the *Fravasi* or spiritual investment of the child. According to the bidding of these celestial messengers, this plant was mixed with milk and drunk by the parents. And the child was conceived.

At Zarathustra's birth, the house was encircled by a divine glow—and in the heavens a great star drooped close to earth to announce the glad tidings, and a comet flashed across the heavens. All nature rejoiced—but in the demon world there was terrible consternation and the monsters of hate fled away frantically at this dread threat to their kingdom. As he was born, the child laughed loud and joyfully, and when the physicians touched him, his brain throbbed so, that their hands were repelled.

The infancy of the child Zarathustra has been given as fanciful a setting as the stories of the child Krishna. According to the Avesta, from the beginning of his life the forces of evil, impersonified by the Turanian ruler, made all efforts to assassinate the babe who was destined

to bring Iran to her glory. But destiny frustrated each effort in turn and only in his seventh year when his father, apparently a little exhausted by the great burden of his responsibility, gave his son under the care of a learned tutor, did these attacks lessen. The name of the teacher is given as Burzin-Kurus. Syrian and Arabic traditions have even linked the training of Zarathustra with Jeremiah or Ezra of Israel.

At his fifteenth year, Zarathustra was confirmed in the faith of his fathers, and by the ritual which seems to have a common ancient origin among all Aryans, was invested with the sacred thread, which never leaves the man through his life. Later Zoroaster adopted this rite into his own teaching. This sacred thread or Kusti, similar to the sacred thread of the Brahmans, was given to each youth at the age of maturity, as the sign of entrance into the faith of his fathers. The Kusti had to be worn around the middle of the body, near the heart and was attached to the sacred shirt. It was composed of 72 threads, which are symbolic of 72 parts of the Yashas or scriptures. Six threads were loose at each end, marking the six seasonal feasts, and the twelve together recall the signs of the Zodiac. The thread was passed three times about the body indicating the three principles of "good thought, good deed and good action." And was tied twice in front and twice in back in honor of the four elements. The hollow within the cord, was symbolic of the space between heaven and earth. It was designated that the knots of the Kusti must be tied and untied with prayer before each meal, on rising, before retiring and at other designated times. Be-

fore touching the thread the hands and face were to be washed and the Kemna prayer pronounced.

Of Zarathustra's subsequent personal life after he attained his maturity, we know that he was thrice married. By his first wife, he had one son and three daughters, one of whom was Purushista, who was later married to Jamaspa, one of the two great apostles of Zarathustra's doctrine. His second wife bore him two sons, Urvatatnara and Hvarecithra, who eventually became the heads of the important agricultural and warrior castes, in the organization founded by their father. The third wife, Hvovi, was the niece of Jamaspa and daughter of the second great disciple of Zarathustra, Frashaoshtra, both of whom were officers of the King Vishtaspa, the great convert and royal disciple of Zarathustra. No children were born to Hvovi, but around her is woven a supreme mystic prophecy, for she is destined to be the mother of three spiritual mystic children of the prophet and also of the Saoshyant, the hallowed Messiah of the Zarathustrian faith.

It was in his twentieth year that Zarathustra first felt stirred by the great call of his mission and filled with the determination of finding the Truth, he left his home in its quest. For no less than ten years, he was a solitary wanderer, seeking the truth everywhere, and walking over the span of Iran in its search. Pliny and Alcibiades tell us that most of these years were passed in the silence and seclusion of mountain caves, where he sought to penetrate the secret of Ahura Mazda through meditation. In these solitary searches of the spirit—that quest which each prophetic spirit must travel alone—he reached his thir-

tieth year, when his yearning for illumination was rewarded. In his wanderings he had come to the River Daiti in Adarbajian, that district of so many of his life's great episodes. Standing upon its banks at dawn, suddenly he was enwrapped in a Great Ecstasy and in the radiance of this world-within-worlds, he saw a fiery being approaching him from the south. The figure was like a pillar of light, nine times the size of a man and bore a staff of flames. Towering like a luminous column above the prophet, he commanded him to cast off the garment of his body and informed him that he was the archangel Vahu Manah, who had come to lead him to the very presence of Ahura Mazda. Guided by this benign messenger of the Highest, Zarathustra found himself in the very presence of the Supreme Hierarch, in a great glow of light. From Him, he learned the word of Truth, the secrets of the Mysteries and the Revelation of the future and from Ahura he received the ordainment of his mission. Transfigured in being, Zarathustra emerged from his Ecstasy which was thrice repeated. And invested by the Supreme One Himself, he set out on his passionate journey through his country, searching souls to whom he might impart his Revelation and, like the Prophets of Israel, calling out the warning of the Highest. The Revelation came in the thirtieth year of the Prophet's life, that year of revelation among the saviours. In the doctrines of Zoroaster, it is called the "Year of Religion," for it affixes the day when the kingdom of diabolic forces shuddered over the assault upon their citadel, and girded themselves for the coming battle. And it was the year



when Zarathustra the Prophet, was born of Zarathustra, the shepherd of Iran.

In his heart-rending search for the followers of Truth, a decade passed. No teacher's path has ever seemed so empty, as does the way taken in these years by the indefatigable Zarathustra. Finding no converts in his own land, he traveled even to Turan, the proverbial foes of Iran. And although his own countrymen, hearing him, had turned their backs on his teaching, in Turan his very life was threatened, and only the sovereign's mediation saved him from assassination. Loneliness was the one companion of these years.

Various are the accounts of the wanderings of this period. In the zeal of bringing the word of Truth, it is said that Zarathustra traveled not only through Persia and Turan, but even went to India and as far as China, spreading his words, but all in vain.

But Ahura Mazda did not leave him, and the revelations of his Lord continued to sustain Zarathustra's conviction. Seven great revelations are recorded during these years in which Ahura Mazda and His Six Archangels, the Amesha Spentas, appeared and instructed Zarathustra. In the Zoroastrian teachings, the Amesha Spentas are the Arch-angelic pillars of the Throne of Ahura Mazda Himself. They are the Divine Reflections of the Highest Human Virtues. The three who stand upon the right of the throne are male and represent Good Will, Supreme Truth and Benevolent Power. The female Archangels are upon the left, and are Holy Piety, Sacredness and Immortality. And by these six Ineffable Beings, Zarathustra was ac-

corded six visitations; in various sacred sites on his journey, each of the Hierarchal legion imparted to him one of the Great Truths. In this manner Zarathustra was initiated into the Truth of the Sacred Fire; the inner secrets of the soil; of animal life; of metals, of plants, of the care of water, and of the eternal conflict between good and evil. As a talisman, to fortify him in the assaults of temptation and of evil, of which Ahura Mazda warned him, and to sustain him in his moments of despair, he was given a Mantram known as the Ahuna Vairya, which like the Lord's Prayer, is believed to be a sanctuary to the soul:

"The will of the Lord is the law of righteousness. The gifts of Vahuman go to the deeds done in this world for Mazda. He who succors his poor brethren shall gather the strength of Ahura."

Nor did Ahura Mazda warn him in vain of the temptations to come, for soon the forces of evil gathered their cohorts and made a concerted attack against the prophet. First the demon hordes tried to kill him, but they were foiled when the prophet recited the Ahuna Viarya against them. Then they tempted the prophet with the offer of a kingdom, but he remained adamant, reminding them that he would conquer them "with the sacred mortar, with the sacred cup, with the Word proclaimed by Mazda." And as they acknowledged their defeat, he seals his victory by reciting again the Ahuna Vairya, that protective Mantram, in every emergency.

Notwithstanding these mighty revelatory weapons with which he was armored, Zarathustra met no man whose

heart was open, until his own cousin, the Ananda of Zarathustra, became a convert to this word of God. For two years, Metyomah was the one believer, but still Zarathustra persevered. And it was then, that Ahura Mazda bid him go to the court of Vishtaspa, the king—because, though the ruler was surrounded by numerous servitors of darkness, he himself was ready for the revelation of truth. Undismayed by erstwhile failure, Zarathustra set out towards the royal court, aflame to fulfill his mission. As he journeyed on the road to the Royal Court, often he prayed that the heart of Vishtaspa would be softened to receive the Teaching—for difficult was the road of that solitary pilgrim, who in vain had besought his people to hearken to the truth. How often humanity stands indicted by these fragments of the past, so filled with anguish—the solitary figure kneeling upon Gethsemane; a wanderer along the trails of China; a soul in agony praying upon the sands of Iran. All these are voices in that wilderness which is humanity.

Finally, Zarathustra arrived at Vishtaspa's capital. There he learned that the ruler was at the royal races—and with the forthrightness of these single-minded prophets of Truth, he went at once to the race course, and met and addressed his sovereign face to face. But the conversion of the king was not an easy one and has been termed often Zoroaster's great ordeal—for two years Zoroaster remained in the court speaking to Vishtaspa, hearing the threats of his courtiers and feeling the hatred of their intrigues. In their zeal to discredit this newcomer whose doctrine had gained the attention of the king, they

bribed the keeper of his dwelling to place in his quarters the nefarious and forbidden instruments of black magic, such as the hair and nails of cats and dogs, which were shortly discovered and the prophet was thrown into prison. A miracle released him—very shortly after his imprisonment, the king's favorite horse became ill. Zarathustra was consulted, and offered to cure it for three boons—the conversion of the King, the conversion of the Queen, and the undertaking of a Crusade for the Faith by the King's son, Isfendiar. The horse was miraculously cured and the king, faithful to his word, turned to the faith of Zarathustra, and made it the court religion. And it was in the court that Zarathustra discovered the two great apostles of the Zarathustrian faith, his great disciples: Frashaoshtra, vizier and attendant of the King, and his brother, Jamaspa.

The conversion of Vishtaspa was indeed a great moment in the faith of Zarathustra, for this son of the Faith never weakened and throughout his entire life sustained his teacher in the great work of Ahura. At his conversion it is said that Zarathustra planted a cypress before the fire-temple of Kishmar, and that this tree grew and spread its beauteous shade over all comers as the king had spread the Teaching of the Prophet to all the corners of his kingdom. Thus the cypress of Kishmar as the Bo-Tree of Asoka in Ceylon, bore witness to the kingly devotees of Zarathustra and Buddha.

In one of the scriptural utterances, a eulogy is paid to the great king in these words:

"He it was who became the arm and the support of the Religion of Zarathustra, of Ahura.

He who freed Religion from the chains—she, who was bound in fetters, helpless,

And placed her in the midst of the nations

Exalted, powerful, advancing and hallowed."

Having attained this great victory for the faith of Ahura Mazda, Zarathustra began with exultation his task of the conversion of Iran. But now he had behind him the ruler and the army, and Vishtaspa was zealous in his determination to spread over the expanses of Iran and even beyond, the teaching of the prophet. Fire Temples were spread over the kingdom and even from afar came seekers who begged to hear the Religion of Light expounded by the Prophet Zarathustra. The traditions tell of many conversions during these years, and even speak of missionaries going out beyond the kingdom to convert other lands to the doctrine of Zoroaster. It is said that these years brought the Master numerous revelations, among them one which foretold to him the entire destiny of his doctrine. Other sources claim that during these years, Zoroaster foretold also the coming of the Christ, and even traveled to Greece and Babylon, adding to the lists of his disciples the great Pythagoras. Be this as it may, since there remain no records to tell the entire tale, we know that numerous passages of the Classic writers pay due reverence to the prophet of Iran as the arch-Magi, and above him the writers of Greece and Rome also have placed a nimbus of true reverence.

In the faith of Iran, Zoroaster is the Great Revealer, the one medium through whom the Supreme Mazda spoke His word, and the vehicle of His commands, and revelations. The Teaching pronounced by Zarathustra is postulated upon the existence of this one Supreme Force for Good—Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Light. With him stand his Holy Spirits, the Six Archangels of the Highest Virtues. But since good is attained only by a continuous conflict against evil, the doctrine also postulates a prince of darkness with six arch-satanic forces, representing the sins of men. These are Hypocrisy; Malice; Treachery; Cowardice; Penuriousness and Annihilation. Between these two hosts of Good and Evil there is a continuous warfare—an eternal Armageddon for the control of humanity. In the midst of so continuous a warfare, Zoroaster propounded no quiescent religion, no humble submission to the hosts of darkness. His was a teaching of militant battle against evil. The eternal duty of man was to wage an unmitigated struggle against the insidious cohorts, so that they might aid the legions of Light eventually to destroy their enemies. Victory was only to the eternally vigilant. Therefore Zoroaster demanded of his followers that they make a moral and conscious choice between good and evil. Failure to make this choice of actively serving Light was of itself a surrender to the dusky destroyers. And like the Prophets of Israel, Zarathustra sounded out his warning to those who slunk from the battle for the Lord.

In the election of good, the supreme Command was utmost devotion to Ahura Mazda, the one Supreme God

of Light. In Him alone was vested the ultimate Principle—immortal and incorruptible. He was the begetter of all existence and man was his supreme creative act—a being, with a wilful spirit, which was immortal. According to the Zoroastrian teaching, Ahura Mazda was the Transcendent Spirit, pure and ineffable, which no man could realize nor any image represent. But since Zarathustra understood that to many it was impossible to attain the worship of an abstract force, he provided two lofty symbols in which his people might visualize this supreme unencompassable power. These two symbols were the Sun and Fire. To Zarathustra, the sun was a veritable synthesis of the spirit of Ahura, in the form in which it could be encompassed by men—a being effulgent, eternally outpouring its beneficence to all, irresistible, undefiled by the threats of evil. On earth, the element of Fire carried this presentation of the High Force to men, since it stood not only for the eternal primeval essence, but also was the great purifying and consuming force. Hence, the religion of Zarathustra was not, as it has been lightly called, a “fire-worship” in the animistic meaning of that term—its ritual was a consecration to the sun and fire, as the great symbols of the One Supernal Force, which unceasingly irradiated its glow, its compassion, its purification and salving force. The greatest sin in the Zarathustrian Teaching was idolatry, because it presumed a denial of this One Monistic Principle, the great Ahura Mazda.

Around the Sacred Fire was built the Teaching of Zoroaster—and he set before the people, the responsibility of keeping the Flame constantly alight, both in its symbolic

and literal meaning. In the Zoroastrian altars, the immortal flame was kept continually lighted. Through the years of his ministry, Zoroaster went through the land, founding Temples of Fire—carrying a living flame from one temple to another. And when once the fire upon the altar of a temple was ignited, it was the highest and most holy duty of the priests—the Magi—to keep the fire undying. Five times each day, the priests came to tend this holy fire, placing upon it a log of sandalwood. Each time they repeated the sacred invocation, calling men to “Benevolent thought, word and deed,” these Three Jewels of so many teachings. So sacred was regarded the Temple Flame that the priest had to wear a veil as he approached it, lest his breath touch the flame and contaminate it. And, as they approached this force, symbolic of Ahura Mazda, the priests remembered the flood of Light which bathes the eternal spaces and flows out to Him, the Highest.

Among the sacred Fires throughout the kingdom of Iran, three were held to be especially holy—one was the fire of the Divine Glory which was kept on the altar of Cabul; the second, the Fire of the Warriors, in the shrine on Mount Asnavad on the Shores of Lake Urmia; and the third was the Fire of the Workers on Mount Revant in Khorassan.

The gospel preached by Zarathustra is one which constantly extols the high liberating force of action. Moreover Zarathustra came to a recently Nomadic people and hence he preached the great grace of a settled life and of establishing the hearth and cultivating the soil. Minister-



ing also to a people which had to combat earth for its sustenance, Zarathustra pronounced toil as one of the great sacraments, one of the highest paths towards the service of god. Perhaps no faith has given greater glory to labor as a way of salvation. In the consecration of a man to his daily task, and in its fulfillment with grace, "heartily as unto the Lord," Zarathustra discerned a veritable discipline of the self, which could destroy darkness and evil. The rhythm of labor permitted no entry to the whispers of evil. Zarathustra felt there was greater service rendered to God in the tilling of the soil and in devotion to the land, than in prayers offered up in idleness, or in fasting, self-torture and excessive ascetism. Labor was the outward and visible token of man's realization of duty. In the manner of rendering tribute to the Most High Zarathustra placed the maximum importance upon agriculture, which came to be regarded as an actual part of the ritual of worship. In doing service to the land, in laboring for the cultivation of the blessed soil, man performed a duty to god. And a revelation of the extraordinary emphasis he placed on the daily responsibilities of humanity as the instrumentations of salvation, is seen in Zarathustra's citation of the four places which must be held most sacred to each worshipper of Ahura Mazda—one was the Temple with its sacred fire; second, the home with its hearth and children; third, the land where corn and fruit is raised; and fourth, there where dry land had been irrigated and waste land drained. Such sites were truly blessed.

Thus in the Vendidad, one of the sacred books, we read:

"He who sows corn, sows holiness. He makes the law of Mazda grow higher and higher; he makes the law of Mazda as flourishing as he can, with 100 acts of adoration, 1000 creations, 10,000 sacrifices.

"When barley comes forth, the devas start up; when the corn is growing, then faint the devas; when wheat is coming forth, the devas are destroyed. In that house, they can no longer stay, from that house they are beaten off, wherein wheat is thus coming forth. It is as though red hot iron were turned about in their throats when there is plenty of corn."

Three commands were enveloped in the Teaching of the Prophet—the avoidance of lies, which were regarded as great evil; the keeping of one's word of honor; and the avoidance of contact with death, which was considered as the maximum defiler. Death furnished the theme of an entire doctrine with specially prescribed tabus, which we shall touch upon later.

The Scriptures of Zoroastrianism are the Avesta. This work unfortunately remains to us only in part. For as Alexander the Great marched towards Asia on his path of conquest, he destroyed the sacredly-preserved copy of the Avesta, when, at the instigation of his mistress, he sacked Persepolis. This copy was inscribed in gold letters upon a special parchment and sacredly preserved. What has come down to us, therefore, is said to be but a twentieth of that which entered into the original—and it is believed that only one of the original books, the Vendidad, is in its original form. The west owes the discovery of the Avesta to the work of a French student Anquetil Duperron in the

later Eighteenth Century. In his research in the Bodleian library, he saw a fragment of the Avesta script and determined to trace down the whole. Visiting India, he brought back a translation of the work, which is now in the national library in Paris, and which furnished the first introduction to the modern world of this scripture of the Zoroastrians.

Six parts are included in the Avesta: The Yasnas which form the liturgy of the teaching and which include the Gathas; the latter are the most sacred portion of the entire Avestas, since these are conceded to be the oldest parts of the Teachings and comprise the utterances of Zarathustra himself, with the Revelations transmitted to him directly by Ahura Mazda. In these Gathas may be traced the entire poignancy of Zoroaster's ministry—even after the conversion of Vishtaspa. For, like all the promulgators of a new Faith, conflict and despair are often his lot, as the heretics and infidels turn away from the word of Truth. But, again one sees the exaltation of the servant of the Lord, in his moments of triumph when he can bring to the feet of his Master, at least one victory. Thus we remember his exaltation and gratitude when he thinks of his closest followers, and asks the grace of Mahura for these righteous converts to the doctrine of light:

“O Mazda Ahura, unto Thy Blessings and Benevolence and Righteousness do I look for the recompense which Zarathustra hath promised the men of his covenant—those first won to the Faith of Ahura, in this House of Song.

"Kavi Vishtaspa hath accepted the creed created by the Righteousness of holy Mazda Ahura; he hath accepted the authority of the covenant and the path of Benevolence. So be it accomplished, in accordance with Thy desire!

"The fair form of one that is dear to me hath Frashashtra promised unto me; may Thou, Sovereign Mazda Ahura, grant that she attain the full comprehension of Righteousness for her good self.

"Jamaspaspa in Righteousness, hath accepted this creed, lordly in essence. And he, who partakes of benevolence, accepts this authority. Grant me, Ahura, that these may find their protection in Thee.

"This man, Metyomah, has set this way before him, having understood it in his spirit. He who would see the truth of life, to him will be made known the commands of Mazda, for the activity of life.

"In accordance with Thy promise, grant Thy blessings to all who acknowledge that Righteousness, Benevolence and Mazda are One, and who worship Thee, O, Ahura, with reverence."

There is also the *Vespered*, used for special occasions, while the *Vendidad* gives the rules for cleanliness and uncleanness, and the laws of avoidance of darkness and its machinations, also the Zoroastrian attitude towards death, marriage, legitimacy and other social problems. The *Yashts* were Hymns, dedicated to various divine attributes, while the *Khordah* was the collection of prayers for laity and priests. Later writings added the *Bundahish*, the *Book of Arda Viraf* and other books to the scriptures



SIGN OF MAITREYA

From the Painting by Nicholas Roerich



and have attempted to restore something of the lost sacred writings, through remembered traditions.

From these later writings come additional expositions of the gospel of Zoroaster. Man, in the light of his teaching, was a multi-fold being comprising his perishable body; his soul, or intelligence; and, more important, his *fravasi*, the spiritual counterpart which was immortal and indestructible and formed his link with Ahura Mazda.

We are also told of a cosmological set-up in these scriptural writings of Iran. According to these, there are four periods in the plans of the world—each 3000 years in length. In the first—represented by those happy Golden years when Yima or Jemshid ruled, Ahura Mazda triumphed on earth and Good walked abroad. In the second period, darkness conquered and earth was submerged by a great catastrophe. A third period followed, when the struggle between good and evil—eternal and unabating—was renewed, but the contest remained undetermined until the arrival of Zarathustra who ushered in the New Era. This era will continue the battle, but already the direction has been changed and Good has the upper hand, in preparation for the Advent of the Blessed Saoshyant, the Messiah, who brings with His coming the complete and final triumph of Righteousness on earth. In Zoroaster's faith, Saoshyant takes the place of the Boddhistva Maitreya in Buddhism, or the Kalki-Avatar of Hinduism—the Great Saviour for Whom the world waits.

To woman, Zarathustra's teaching accorded a high place. In the Hierarchy of the Holy Spirits, three were Feminine. And women were permitted to perform the

priestly office. And around the coming of Saoshyant, the prophet also perceived a mission to womanhood in the person of Hvovi, for she is declared the mystic instrument of the Advent of the new being, who is regarded as the spiritual descendant of Zarathustra.

The phenomenon of death occupied much of the Vendidad and the later writings of the doctrine of Zoroastrianism; and a highly elaborated covenant as to the attitude of men to death is pronounced. The body, from which the spirit has departed, is regarded as loathsome and unclean; therefore men were commanded to avoid contact with death in any form. Burial of the body or its cremation were forbidden—because the unclean should not pollute with its presence either fire which was sacred, nor the equally sacred earth, which yielded to man his sustenance and should not be burdened with the discarded and putrescent waste. To provide for the dead, a lonely Tower was erected, high-walled but without a roof. The dead body had to be brought by daylight on an iron bier to the Tower of Silence or Dekhma, and exposed to the birds of the air to be devoured—and in this final act of providing sustenance to the birds of the air, at least some use was made of an otherwise useless thing. Nor could any men touch the body without defiling themselves—only specially isolated persons who lived according to strict rules in a kind of funeral-caste, could bear the bodies to the Tower of Silence. And no man could do this alone, he must be accompanied by two others as witnesses. After which a special lustration act had to be performed by them, although they could not mingle freely with others. In this



way, Zarathustra emphasized the negligibility of the body itself when it was once divested of the *Fravasi*, or the eternal garment of the spirit. To aid the spirit in its passage to the Bridge of Judgment, prayers are recited for three days and fasting is commanded on the fourth day.

The uncleanness attached to the body was such, that if it had been carried over a highway, no man could pass that way, until it had been purified. Among the ways prescribed for this purification was the reciting of the Ahuna Mantram and the Kemna Mazda, another most holy prayer, which went thus:

"What man, O Mazda, could grant protection unto such as I, a weak mortal, when the infidel makes ready to overpower me? Who, other than Thee with Thy Fire and Mind, through Whose activities the law of Righteousness is fulfilled, O Mahura? Reveal unto me clearly this knowledge, so as to help me spread Thy Faith.

"Who shall smite the foes, through Thy words, which are our shield? Reveal Thou to me Thy true leader, wise and comforting; then unto him let the archangel approach with Good Mind unto him, O Mazda, whosoever he be whom Thou dost love.

"Protect us all about from our foes, O ye Mazda and holy Armaiti. Perish devilish Druj, devil's spawn; perish, you devil-fashioned; perish, followers of devil's laws; utterly perish, O Druj! Utterly disappear, O Druj! Vanish thou completely to the north, where thou mayest not destroy the creation of the Divine Law.

"And Hail unto ye, Holy Reverence and Holy Zeal!"

Druj here was a collective, symbolizing the entire power of evil.

Another rather unique detail of the abhorrence of death, as revealed in the Vendidad, extends to the rules about the cutting of nails and hair. As with early magic cults, all of which attach great importance to the concentrated attributes of a human being in his hair and nails, the Vendidad commands that when the nails and hair are cut, they must be placed before one on a table, lest any are lost, then carried carefully out and buried into a deep hole and the prayers recited. Otherwise the sorcerers and demons will get hold of these and exercise their sorcery and conjurations with them. This belief that the hair or even nails of a man furnished a teraph for black magic, is almost universally found in early religions.

An after-life of the spirit was also minutely described in these works. Having been liberated from the body, the soul passed for three days through a test of silence, after which it was permitted to pass to the Bridge of Decision, where it encountered the living embodiment of its acts upon earth. Either the embodiment was a pure maiden, if the man's life on earth had been lofty, or if the opposite, this personified synthesis was a hideous creature. The spirit then came to the Bridge of Judgment, to be committed to one of three levels—either the murky, crowded hell of the damned; the limbo of the indifferent; or the happy paradise of the freed in spirit.

The wanderings of the spirit after death are related in one of the later books of the Zoroastrian writings, the "Book of Arda Viraf," which is the "Divina Commedia"

of ancient Persia. Arda Viraf, high priest in the later Sassanian Dynasty of Persia which poured new life into the ancient traditions, is said to have inscribed this work after a trance in which he entered the kingdoms of the departed.

Accompanied by Sroash, the Celestial Messenger of Ahura, who is so beloved in the Zarathustrian Faith, Arda Viraf is conducted into a nether-world. In that awesome journey, first he beholds the body of a righteous man. For three days after death, the soul of a man sits on top of the body. But the soul of a good man during this time is regaled by the sweet scents of trees, which are wafted to it. At the end of that time, the soul comes to a pleasant bridge where he sees "before him, his own religion and his own good deeds in the graceful form of a damsel, who praises him for creating her in so graceful a form." Then Arda Viraf is taken by the Angel Sroash to visit the various paradises of the good; these range through all degrees of virtue, but we are told that one is more sublime than another, and life for the good soul is happy beyond description.

Then, however, Arda Viraf is led to a river, "gloomy as a dreadful hell," on which he beholds many souls and with them guardian angels, who are helping them across. Asking the meaning of this river, Arda Viraf learns from Sroash that "The river is the many tears men shed as they make lamentation for the departed. They shed these tears unlawfully and the tears swell into this river. Those who are not able to cross are those for whom much lamentation and weeping were made." Then Sroash bids Arda

Viraf, "Spread forth to the world; tell those who are in the world not to make lamentation and weeping unlawfully for those who have gone, for so much harm and difficulty may befall thereby to the souls of their departed!"

Then Arda Viraf perceives the souls who are neither good nor evil, and whom indifference has thrust into a limbo; for even there, nature spews out the lukewarm. Finally, he is taken to witness the agony of the evil spirits. The first three nights after death are passed by these spirits in the torments of "mischief and evil." On the third day, they are accosted by a dread wind, cold and malodorous, which bears to them a profligate woman, naked, decayed, and full of filth. She is the embodiment of their bad actions, and foully reproves them for creating her. Thence Arda Viraf sees a series of hells of such invention and dread, that after only three days in them the spirit calls out in terror, "it is already 9000 years and they will not release me." For 9000 years is its allotted span in this hideous place of tortures, until Saoshyant the Messiah will come to awake even the dead again.

Thus does Arda Viraf describe his descent into that Inferno, "Descending into a very narrow and fearful place, I also saw the greedy jaws of hell like a most frightful pit. Enveloped it was in a darkness so dense that one had to be led by the hand. And in a stench so hideous that every one who inhales it struggled, and staggered and fell. And because of the close confinement it was impossible for anything to exist there. Yet each one thought 'I am alone.' And after three days and nights elapsed, each one

cried, 'The 9000 years are completed, yet will they not release me.' Everywhere here even the lesser noxious creatures were as high as mountains and they so tore and seized and tormented the souls of the wicked as would be unworthy of a dog."

In this amazing book, a foretoken of the journey of Dante, there is especial interest in the passage which forbids men from weeping over their departed, because of the difficulties they place in the path of the dead. The unique analogy of this belief to the Hindu concept of quiet which must attend the departing spirit, for three days after passing, once again indicates the single stems of the two faiths; and the constant identities of the Eastern beliefs.

With such attitude regarding death, it is not surprising that suicide was considered as among the most heinous acts by the Prophet. By destroying his life a man sinned against Ahura Himself for he thereby reduced the army of righteousness by one, in a conflict against evil where each recruit of good was needed. And, still more serious, he sinned against the Supreme, in that he had permitted the sacred fire of enthusiasm for the good to die in him. And man was commanded, above all, to nurture within himself the sacred fire of enthusiasm for the good just as the priests nurtured the sacred fires of the temple. This active insistence on sustaining the conscious effort towards beneficence marks the entire teaching of Zarathustra and places it in one of the highest levels of prophetic utterance. Man must be a vital and living instrument of good!

Not quiescent, but an active soldier and performer in its cause!

Throughout his life—and he was ordained a long one—Zarathustra remained the ardent and passionate lover of the Lord, building His temples, exhorting his people to labor for His truth—a burning human torch whose courageous assault on evil exalted him to the ranks of the greatest law-givers. His was not a meek faith—he perceived Good as an aggressive principle, which took the strongholds of evil even by storm. In the last twenty years of his life, his ardor had inflamed Vishtaspa and his people to start out on the Holy Crusading wars which he had provisioned years before as he converted Vishtaspa. The foe was no other than the Turanian people, which continued to be the eternal enemies both of Iran and of the faith of Zarathustra. In this war was to be fulfilled the last boon which Zarathustra had asked of King Vishtaspa—that the King's son, Isfendiar, might lead the crusade for the faith. But, alas, when war was declared, Isfendiar, son of Vishtaspa, was in prison, cruelly sentenced through the treachery of his enemies, who denounced him falsely to his father. Isfendiar is the Galahad of Zoroastrianism. Throughout his life, he had been the spotless knight, who, deeply filled with the love of his Faith, had proved himself the hero of the early religious wars of King Vishtaspa. Then, at his father's behest, he had gone out with the word of Ahura Mazda to many lands in a great missionary ardor. Destined to succeed his father, he had returned to his native land, only to be thrust into prison because of the false accusation of a jealous brother. Dur-

ing Isfendiar's imprisonment, the Turanian foe again declared war on Iran. But this time the hero-warrior Isfendiar was not there to rally his troops. Meeting but weak resistance, the infidels were already invading the country. It was then that the King's vizier, Jamaspa himself, went to the prison and released the hero, begging him to forget the wrongs done to him and to save his country and the Faith of Ahura Mazda from the foe.

Isfendiar hastened from prison and collecting his army, inspired them with new courage. Leading them against the foe with the spirit of the holy crusader that he was, he gained a mighty victory, driving the infidels back into their country. Thereupon Isfendiar followed this with an invasion of the Turanian lands during which the king was killed. This ended the Turanian threat against the faith of Ahura.

But alas! Isfendiar had left the prison walls too late to prevent the great disaster that now befell Iran—the death of Zarathustra himself at the hands of the infidel. For in their dread invasion of the land before Isfendiar's arrival, the Turanians had already reached Balkh, where Zarathustra himself was at the Fire Temple. As the enemies entered the Sacred Citadel, Zarathustra was tending the fire with eighty of his high priests. And in the presence of the Sacred Fire, the foe struck down the eighty priests of Ahura Mazda. And with them the enemy struck down the Master himself, and his blood drenched the holy altar, and quenched the sacred fire.

Thus perished the blessed Zarathustra, in his seventy-

seventh year, even as he tended the Sacred Fire of his God, Ahura Mazda.

Perhaps no death could have been more fitting to the Fiery Prophet than that which came to him—a martyr before the Sacred Fire of the Temple Altar. It was a death which synthesized his life, for his entire days had been an unceasing consecration to the Sacred Fire. Always intensely, even though half of his years were passed in the despair of seeming failure, the teacher of Iran finally conquered his people to the faith of his God. Into the Persian soul he brought the inspiration of a lofty teaching which has never departed from them—for though Zoroastrianism as an organized faith has left Persia, its people may be regarded as the spiritual heirs of his teaching. The beauty, the lofty sense of creative effort, the courage, became ingredients of their future—it was the patrimony left to them by the faith of their fathers.

Sustained by the valiant character which Zarathustra's teachings had given to the complex of his people, the Persians entered upon a history, glorious in the arts of war and peace. The two hundred years after the Prophet's death saw Persia spread its empire to unprecedented splendor. The great Cyrus first united Media and Persia, then avenged the death of the Prophet by the capture of the Turanians. The Greek colonies fell before him, and before his advancing army fell even the fabulous Croesus. And Babylon the Great, unmindful of Daniel's warning and of the ominous handwriting upon the wall, succumbed to the great conqueror who went forward in the name of Ahura Mazda.



In Darius, too, Persia's magnificence still widened, until it was arrested by those decisive battles of Marathon and Salamis, when Greece turned back the Persian tide. Alexander the Great confirmed this victory against the Iranians—staining the laurels of his conquest with vandalism, when, at the behest of Thais the courtesan, he set fire to Persepolis the beautiful and with it destroyed the Arch-copy of the great Avesta. Even this could not stifle the Truth of Mazda. The doctrine of Zoroaster lived on, even accepted secretly by the Parthians themselves. Six Centuries later, when Iran was once again won back under Persian authority by a descendant of Sassan, with him a new renaissance of the Zarathustrian Faith appeared. It was then that Arda Viraf was made high priest of Persepolis and it is said that in his religious fervor he was verbally able to recite much of the destroyed Avesta which was set down from his oral declamations and still remains as part of the later gospel.

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#### MANICHAEISM

A greater threat against Zoroastrianism came not through the sword but through a new teacher who rose up in Iran in 240, in one of the most extraordinary and inexplicable religious movements which history has seen. Within Iran there rose up the new teacher, Mani—whose doctrine flashed up and threatened for a brief time the future not only of Iran but of Christianity.

In many ways, the story of Manichaeism, the religion of Mani, is one of the most poignant and strangely haunt-

ing episodes in religious history. A religion destined to continuous persecution, its followers hounded by all faiths, it nevertheless had an almost mysteriously tenacious existence. Its doctrine, which interwove a call to high universal brotherhood with a curious cosmogonic fantasmagoria, seemed to possess a strange lure, and long after the most rigorous measures had been taken to stamp out the faith by popes and kings, sporadic evidences of its survival were discovered, and sparks of its existence were revealed not only in Persia, but in such far-removed spots as China, Central Asia and the Graeco-Roman empire! Despite the pathos and furtive character which pervades the entire story of Manichaeism, it pronounced its threatening challenge to the beginnings of the Christian Church.

It was on the very day of the coronation of King Shapur of Persia—March 20, in the year 242—that Mani, a native of Ectabana, chose to proclaim to the celebrating throngs that he was a prophet of God with a new revelation. Mani was then twenty-four years old and the son of a high-born Persian of the Moghtasilah sect. This sect, having its foothold in southern Babylonia, professed a sort of Baptism, and had absorbed the teachings of various faiths, and probably some of the tenets of Christianity, still young. Thus, with the faith of his father, Mani had already accepted a varied gospel, and during his boyhood years he is said to have had visions and revelations. But even before his birth, the Manichaean tradition tells us, his mother had been visited by the Angel Tawn who had brought her the annunciation of her son's mission. Mani himself was forbidden to make known his ministry until

his twenty-fourth year. And this he elected to do on the high holiday when all were assembled to rejoice at the ascent of their king. It is said that the king's brother, Piruz, was already a convert to this eclectic new faith—perhaps this would explain the amazing daring of the young apostle of a new order, who intruded upon the solemnity of a king's feast day. However, it does not appear that Shapur was offended by the young apostle; in fact, he listened with a sympathetic ear to the views of this new self-acclaimed redeemer.

Remaining but a short while in Iran, Mani is said to have set out on a vast proselytizing mission which took him far and wide over the breadth of Asia—and that he actually trod the distant trails of the land during his lifetime is no longer dubious, as each explorer today adds his evidence to the growing story. It was in Asia and China undoubtedly that Mani, who appears also to have had unusual artistic talents, encountered Chinese art which had reached so high a level. Returning to his native land, he brought these arts back to Persia—to a soil fertile for artistic creation. But this time Shapur was not open to his gospel, for the Magian priests by now so influential in his court, denounced Mani and he was forced to flee. With the accession of Shapur's successor, Hamiz, the young Persian apologist returned to his home, carrying on his teaching without molestation, but watched with vengeful eyes by the Magians, who had now lost favor. No sooner however did Hamiz die and Bahram come to the throne, than the Magians returned to power. Determined to stamp out this noxious growth which took root so swiftly,

they took Mani a prisoner, then crucified him—and, as a special warning to all who dared to follow his heretical doctrine, they flayed his body and stuffed the skin with hay. Mounting this ominous effigy upon the gates of the royal city, Gunde Shapur, they gave token of the awful end that awaited the infidels. Generations later this gate was still known as Mani's Gate, in remembrance of the dread end of the founder of this strange faith.

The Gospel of Manichaeism was a curious one. As it comes down to us, it interwove some of the doctrines of Zoroaster and Christ, with a belief in a dualistic universe in which Light and Darkness were separate creative entities. All that was high and lofty had been created by Light, and Darkness in turn had conceived, as its spawn, all the things of evil including, strangely enough, man. The kingdom of Darkness and that of Light were strictly separated. The former, however, was apparently an uncomfortable place, whereas the kingdom of Light was Elysian. The news of this happy dwelling-place reached the prince of Darkness, and he determined to investigate, making an incursion into the kingdom of Light. He was routed eventually, but some of the particles of evil remained in this universe of good, and the result of this hybrid intermingling of these forces, is our present world. According to Mani's faith, the burden of our present humanity is to help Light rid itself of these evil fragments, so that the future world will once again see the realm of Light entirely separated from the realm of Darkness. Apparently, nature is also helping the process, for Mani proclaimed that the heavenly bodies, with the

aid of the twelve Zodiacal signs, were organized into a bucket-like system by which these light particles were being drained from earth, refined and ultimately sent on to God Himself.

In the doctrine of Mani, Christ had the rôle of redeemer—but this was not the Christ crucified, whom they did not avow; instead the Manichaeans proclaimed an universal Christus—a belief which they claimed to have founded on an apocryphal gospel of Peter. Buddha and Zarathustra were recognized by Mani, as the prophets who had preceded him; and he also gave praise to Plato, Paul and Hermes Trismegistus. His credo was outlined in seven books, six of which were in Syriac and one in Persian; the latter was the Book Shabuhragen, written for King Shapur, in which Mani pronounced that the “difference between Light and Darkness is like that between a king and a pig.” In this work Mani also proclaims himself as God’s messenger, saying “wisdom and deeds have always, from time to time, been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age it was brought by the messenger called Buddha to India; in another by Zarathustra to Persia; in another by Jesus to the west. Now this revelation has come through me, Mani, messenger of the God of Truth to Babylon.”

Despite all persecution this doctrine persisted and centuries later it still survived. For nine years it counted in its rolls, that pillar of the early church, Saint Augustine. It succeeded in establishing a center with a papacy in Bulgaria, from where missions were sent forth to proselytize; and the catechism of the Manichaeans was taught in

China, and even, according to some, formed the bases of the Albigenian cult. As a poignant echo, early in this century, explorers to Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan found fragments of the unmistakable manuscripts of Mani—bearing witness to the extraordinary contagion of his zeal.

Mani had started a fire which was indeed difficult to stamp out. And centuries later its sparks were still burning in the most unexpected corners of the earth. The ghastly memory of their leader's tragic destiny did not dull the enthusiasm of his secret devotees, and time and again, for generations, did the spectre of Mani rise up to taunt the established churches of all creeds, for they were never certain, but that in some secret catacomb, the hated Manichaeans were pursuing their covenants.

### THE SUFI MYSTICS OF ISLAM

Strangling this threat against the faith of Zoroaster, Iran retained her splendor through the reigns of several enlightened monarchs. But in 636 A. D., the advancing host of Islam, sweeping forward like a gale in the name of Allah, vanquished the Persian host in the battle of Cadesia. It is said that, not prowess conquered Persia, but misfortune; for as the twin battle lines of Iran and Islam faced each other, suddenly a great sand storm came up. The sand swept into the eyes of the troops of Iran, blinding them and making them easy prey to the Islamic foe. Be this as it may, Islam was successful and Persia was hers. With the fervent proselytising spirit of Islam she

brought her faith into Persia. Numerous followers of the doctrine of Zoroaster fled before the storm of Islam—setting out for that great haven of faiths, India. And today the Parsis in India remain as the world's one stronghold of the magnificent and lofty teaching of Zoroaster. In Persia, 30,000 kaffirs, whom no threats could induce to change their faith, still stand as a tiny island amidst Islam, a testimony upon the soil of Persia, of its past glories.

In effect, Islam conquered Persia only externally—she never changed Persia's heart and eventually the spirit of Persia, that heritage which Zarathustra had given the land, conquered the conquerors. That which Persia could not outwardly express in religion she expressed in beauty, producing some of the most exquisite creations of the ages, as the mute evidences of her inner strivings. And this same yearning for beauty carried its fragrance even into the austere Moslem faith, producing one of the rarest mystic branches of Islam, Sufism, which combines the devotional spirit of Iran, with all the beauty and fragrance of Persian creation.

In all faiths, a special place must be reserved for the god-intoxicated spirits who, above all the theological or doctrinal rationale of religion, find the wine of life in their love for God. All faiths have had these rare mystics, those lovers of the Lord, whose rapture transported them far beyond the level of earthly human experience. If the East, to whom the ecstasy of such experience is so close, has had many of these mystics, the West may also remember its Saint Francis, its Teresa of Avila, John of

the Cross, Jacob Boehme and others for whom unity with their Beloved, the Lord, became the one reason of existence. So it was with the Sufis of Persia, lovers of the divine, poets and musicians all, whose verses have given to the world perhaps the most superb articulations of the abandonment of the spirit to its Divine Lover.

In Islam of the Eighth Century, as in many religions, fear played a dominant note in the attraction of the faithful. This is not true of Islam alone; almost all faiths have passed through the period of belief in a scrutinizing and avenging divinity which metes out satisfying joys to the faithful and dire punishment to the errant. All mystics have rejected the idea of a fearsome deity, and have cut across all traditional theological concepts of God—to meet Him face to face across a bridge of personal experience. With the Sufis this experience rested upon the basis of Love—a love, so impersonal and selfless, that it could take the Citadel of the Highest by storm. It is difficult to trace the beginnings of any religious utterance such as the Sufis, and many have been the explanations of its origin. But perhaps it is most appropriately traceable to a small group of Persians in the Eighth Century, who began to feel God's presence pulsing through the Universe. Feeling fettered by the austere orthodoxy of the Faith of their day, they turned in protest to a quieter and more universal view of the teachings of the Prophet. In designation of their simplicity and as an expression of their renunciation of possession, they adopted a simple woolen garment, which came to identify them. And as the Persian word for wool is *Suf*, the name



became the token of the sect. In Arabian, the word means Purity and there have been opposing views of the derivation of the term Sufism. For our purposes we shall regard the two terms as two sides of the one coin. For the Sufi, the aspirant to unity with the One was a traveler, a *salik*, who journeyed towards the one Real Destiny: Union with the Divine. The journey took him from stage to stage along his path to *Fana*, the final merging with the Divine Light. These stages were a gradual submersion of the individual before the Universal Consciousness, stages which lead through repentance, abstinence, renunciation of the feeling of possession, poverty, trust in god and happiness. Nor was the traveler destined to find the way alone—generally he had accorded to him a teacher, a Sheikh, a Pir, or Murshid, who leads the novitiate along this path of discipline and self-conquest, which also involved service to man, service to God and a vigilance over one's heart.

To such believers, the letter of the doctrine was far less important than the experience of God within one-self; and hence they evolved no dogmatic system. The earliest Sufis were quietists and ascetics, but with the Persian Sufis, quietism was replaced by joy of spirit and love. They proclaimed great joy and laughter in the spirit of the true Sufis, even as they perceived the lessening of the feeling of personality which divided a man from universalism and a sense of the single flux of Divinity through all cosmos. With the discipline of this ego, that Intelligence, of which Mohammed spoke as not the outer Intelligence but that which sprung from the light

of the heart, increased. And the inflow of divine revelation became possible. And ultimately, when the intelligence had attained that complete devotion which annihilated all obstacles, the mergence with the Divine One was possible, through the heart, the spirit and the soul. The way to this glorious consummation was individual—hence the teacher for each pupil, because the method for each pupil depended upon this need of the individual. Therefore the paths to the ultimate unity with God were as numberless as men. But with the Sufis, music and song furnished one of the most effective paths to Divinity, and they found that the music of life could open the flood gates to that Music of the Spheres which bathed a man's entire being. Nor is this far from the Pythagorean geometrizing of the Lord through sound.

And because sound was to them the instrument of their ecstasies, the Sufis of Persia transmuted the Love of God in their hearts into music and poetry—conceiving verse which has never been excelled in the religious poetry of the world.

To Western readers, who may study this poetry without its key, these exquisite articulations of the Persian Sufis will seem like ardent love poems. But when we decipher these true paeans, and comprehend *Who* is the Beloved, the radiant implication of these superb creations spreads before us. For two reasons, it was essential that the Persian Sufi poets adopt this idiom—for one thing, it hid from the eyes of the profane, the mystery of their Love of the Divine, since to the unillumined, the poems still remained the creations of a great poet. And secondly, the very

exultant character of Sufism admits of no other articulation than this sheer abandonment to the Divine Lover. The threat of eventual heresy might have fallen upon the mystics, had not Al-Ghazzali the most formidable writer of Islam, and himself a mystic, placed the token of acceptance upon the Cult.

It is a woman—Rabia—who stands as the first Sufi saint. The entire life of this god-intoxicated woman of Basra, is an ode to the Divine. And the alchemy of her utter love of the Lord transmuted her life's difficulties into sacraments for Him she loved. Her communions, with the Lord as a living Presence ever before her, recall the Conversations of the Maid of Orleans and the Fiery Saint of Avila. When Rabia was a young woman, her parents died and she was sold as a slave to a master whose hand was a heavy one and who set her to the most menial and burdensome tasks. But her spirit had no enslaver, and in her quiet hours of night, she turned to a Master to Whom she readily surrendered. One night, it is said, her earthly master heard the sound of her voice addressing the Lord in that rapturous intimacy which transports the Mystic from the unreal to the Real. "My Lord, Thou knowest that I would desire naught but to seek Thy approval and give each moment of my life to Thee. If liberty were mine I would serve Thee alone; but Thou hast seen best to place me in the hands of this creature who hinders me." This appeal to her Lord so moved the master that he gave her freedom; and henceforth Rabia of Basra dedicated the entire flow of her existence to

the Master, to whom she exultantly surrendered her entire self; a joyous bondsmaid to the Lord.

Her being was like a chalice brimming with this wine of devotion—when men spoke to her of evil, she reminded them that her heart was so full of the Lord that she had no room in it to perceive evil. And by nights she is said to have stood upon the housetop calling to her Beloved, "O God, hushed is the day's noise; with his beloved is the lover, but I have Thee for my lover and alone with Thee I rejoice." She smiled when men spoke of wedlock to her, remembering, like Saint Catherine, the mystic marriage which bound her to the Lord. But it is the flaming and passionate heart of Teresa of Avila that is most closely akin to this ardent Saint of Sufism. With that constant concern lest she might slight the Object of her devotion, which also characterized Teresa, Rabia lay awake by night praying; and she would repent even the short sleep which interrupted her service. Frequently she wept, and when she was asked why, she replied that she often feared that she would be unworthy to meet the Lord. When men of her country—scornful of womanhood—marvelled that a woman could attain such holiness, she recalled to them that "women had never been as infatuated with themselves as men, nor had any of them ever claimed divinity." Faced with poverty and denial, she was often offered comfort and wealth by the devout; reproving them, she would ask "Who has given you your wealth?" And to their natural answer, that the Lord had been the bestower, she would remind them, "He who bestows all things also has given me my

poverty; hence there must be need that I must have it." And thus, in poverty, which she accepted gratefully as a gift from her Beloved, she died in Jerusalem in 752—giving to those Sufi mystics who followed her, the example of an exquisite life to translate into the wine of song.

After Rabia, there has come a processional of Sufi saints, each of whose lives have about them, the same haunting fragrance of love of God. They lived poetry, as they wrote it; through devotion and rapture in contemplating the Lord, they transformed their beings into chalices, which might receive that Beauty which in itself they conceived as a form of God. Thus came into being the most amazing group of mystic writers of history. Among these, the great ones were Al-Ghazzali, no poet, but one of Islam's greatest literary figures; Attar, whose name is bestowed upon the most subtle of all Persia's perfumes; Sadi, the "Nightingale of Shiraz"; Jami; Hafiz, who has been called the greatest lyricist of the world; Omar Khayyam, known so well to the West and he, who is perhaps the master of them all, Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi.

To those who would know the lovely offerings of this wreath of creators, their verses offer an exquisite feast. Space permits us to pause only briefly over a few of these.

It was the ecstatic joy in the Contemplation of the Lord, that filled the works of such a poet as Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi, who stands not only as the greatest of the Sufi poets, but as one of the greatest mystic poets of history. Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi, whose name means the "Glory of Religion" was born on September 30, 1207, in Balkh—that city of Persian destinies. He was therefore living even while

that other mystic—Saint Francis—so strangely like him in spirit, was pronouncing his lays to God in Assisi. Quite other was the life of this troubadour of God in Balkh, whose father was himself a Sufi, greatly renowned for his learning. An erstwhile favorite of the king, the father of Jellal-ad-Din came into disgrace with his sovereign by opposing some of his measures and hence was compelled to leave his native city. Taking his son, he settled in Nashapur, later going to the Roman province of Iconia where he made his home and continued his teaching, for which he was famed. The identifying name of Rumi, the Roman, was later given to the poet in token of his residence here. It is said that Jellal-ad-Din, during his boyhood had constant visions and that he already bore the marks of his future god-intoxication. For, when Attar saw him as a boy in the city of Nashapur, he turned to his father and prophesied that the world would know the flame of his son's devotion. When the poet was twenty-four, his father died and he succeeded him as head of the educational institution over which his father presided. It is said that his brilliant intellectual approach to religion was diverted into the stream of God-love through the influence of Shams-i-Tabriz, to whom he dedicated one of his great works, and who was a veritable Jonathan to him.

The great work of Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi is the "Masnavi," which in effect is the synthesis of all Sufism. For forty-three years the poet worked upon this great masterpiece, dying even before it was completed. In it, he has articulated the faith of joy and rapture of the Lovers of

God who are "fearless in the midst of a sea of fear," and who find that the highest manifestation of God may be reached within their own hearts.

As Jellal says in his "Divan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz:

"Beats there a heart within that breast of thine  
Then compass reverently its sacred shrine  
For the essential Kaaba is the Heart,  
And no proud pile of perishable art."

Thus, Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi pronounced that, even the great shrine in Mecca, containing the precious Black Stone of Islam, the Kaaba, had its counterpart in every human heart.

As with the Assisian, legends are told of Jellal, that frequently he preached to the frogs and fishes, because the nimbus of compassion even to God's humblest creatures, was about him. And so, too, was it with many of the Sufi Saints. For instance, the story is told of Bayazid of Bastam, the Ninth Century Sufi Saint, that having purchased some cardamon seeds in Hamadan, he opened the package on his arrival at his home in Bastam. And seeing that there were some ants in the package, his compassion at having carried God's tiny creatures far from their home was so great, that he walked back the distance of several hundred miles with the seed.

To the pantheistic spirit of Sufism, this legend is not unusual. And for Rumi, God's presence was everywhere; it poured like sunlight through all things—God was at once the Wine of life and the Wine-bearer. As he exultantly sings:

"He comes a moon whose like the sky ne'er saw, awake or dreaming  
Crowned with eternal flame, no flood can lay.  
So from the flagon of Thy love, oh Lord, my soul is swimming,  
And ruined all my body's house of clay.  
When first the Giver of the grape, my lonely heart befriended,  
Wine fired my bosom and my brain filled up,  
But when His image all mine eye possessed, a voice descended—  
Well done, O sovereign wine and peerless cup."

In Jellal-ad-Din-Rumi, Sufism found a voice rarely beautiful, and a spirit truly exalted.

Of all Sufi poets, it is Omar Khayyam who is best known and loved by the West through the beautiful but somewhat colored translation of the Rubayyat of Sir Edward Fitz Gerald. But few Westerners have ever even glimpsed that Omar's wine was not the wine of men, but the ecstatic inflow of a religious mystic experience. Far from the languid singer, seeping life's bliss away in abandon, Omar was one of the greatest scientists of his time, a brilliant teacher of the Koran and a mathematician who followed the great Avicenna, as the sage of early Arabia. Not his the spirit passing life glibly and pleasantly beneath wooded groves—from boyhood his passion was learning and the love of the Divinity. Although the Vizier of the Sultan, who had been his childhood friend, offered him again and again the highest honors and wealth at court, Omar accepted but a modest income and turned to the peace of his studies, a humble and simple man.

And with his great gift of song, he spun his poems—to that Divine Beloved, which was to him the End of the Journey. His wine was the love of the Lord, and truly



with this understanding, we realize the implication of his verse:

“What time my cup in hand in draughts I drain,  
And with rapt heart in consciousness attain,  
Behold what wondrous miracles are wrought  
Songs flow as water from my burning brain.”

Truly the songs which flowed from his enrapt heart—contemplating the beauty of the Lord—have set the world marvelling:

“Lord make thy bounty’s cup for me to flow  
And bread unbegged from day by day bestow,  
Yea with thy wine make me beside myself  
No more to feel the headache of my woe.”

It is related that the following quatrain was Omar’s most intimate—and that after his death his mother heard him recite it to her in a dream:

“Omar’s brimming heart perchance may burn  
In hell and feed its hell fires; in thy turn  
Presume not to teach Allah clemency  
For, who art thou to teach or He to learn?”

Thus, the Sufis have left behind them the redolence of their passion for God. Often in the years the orthodox and puritanical frowned upon their raptures, as too unholy in their joy; for the self-righteous prefer the religion of fear. To these, the story of the end of Hafiz was often brought in reply. At the death of Hafiz, one of the most beloved of all the Sufi poets, his opponents, styling him irreligious, sought to prevent his burial in the Moham-

medan cemetery. Thereupon, to settle the controversy, the usual divination was resorted to—a verse was picked at random from his own writings. As the diviners opened the Book, their eyes read:

“Withdraw not your steps from the obsequies of Hafiz,  
Though sunk in sin he will rise in Paradise.”

Needless to say, the gates of the Moslem Campo Santo opened. Hafiz, who was himself a delightful humorist, would have enjoyed this incident with the self-righteous doctrinaires. For death was welcomed gladly by the Sufis, knowing that Brother Death offered to them union with the divine.

Thus, the story is told of Attar, that in 1229 he was captured by the invading troops of the great Chenghiz Khan. His captor was about to kill him, when another Mongol, taking pity on him, said “Let the old man live. I will give you 1000 pieces of silver for him.” Attar, seeing the precious consummation—death—elude him, turned to his captor and said, “Refuse. The price is too cheap. You will get a better offer for me.”

Soon, another Mongol came up, “Free the old man, I will give you a sack of hay for him.”

“That is my price,” cried Attar. Whereupon his captor in anger at the loss of the 1000 pieces of silver, slew him. And the clay which was Attar, no doubt returned laughingly to the Potter’s Hand.

Joy lived with the Sufi. And when Omar the Tent-maker sang:

"A book of verses underneath the bow,  
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread, and *Thou*  
Sitting beside me in the wilderness,  
The wilderness were paradise enou."

He talked not of an earthly interlude but of verses poured into his heart by the Beloved; of a tree, none other than the Tree of Immortality which has its roots even in the highest paradise; the jug of wine was the intoxication of God—and the bread was a veritable host, which consecration transmuted even into the One.

The Sufis extended not only throughout Persia. They were found in Arabia, Syria, Egypt and in India, the land of all creeds. It is a Sufi poet, Abul Fazi, who was so close to Akbar, the resplendent Mogul Emperor of India, who so beautifully synthesized the spirit of these lovers of God, upon the Mosque of Akbar at Fateh pur Sikri:

"Jesus, on Whom be Peace, said, 'The world is a bridge. Pass over it but do not build upon it.'"

And thus, the Sufi, not building on the unrealities of the earth, walked joyously, exultingly, across life, towards *Fana*—the Merging into Immortality, the One Reality.

Before turning from these God-intoxicated poets of Persia, let us bring to the Lover of Divinity the praise—not here of the Persians—but of that other Lover of the Lord, Thomas à Kempis, who knew so well the meaning of the sweetness of devotion:

"Spread Thou my heart into Thy love, that I may taste and feel how sweet it is to serve Thee, and how joyful

it is to laud Thee, and to be as I were all molten into Thy love. O I am bounden in love, and go far above myself; for the wonderful great fervour that I feel of Thy unspeakable goodness! I shall sing to Thee the song of love, and I shall follow Thee, my Beloved, my highness of thought, wheresoever Thou go; and my soul shall never be weary to praise Thee with the joyful song of ghostly love that I shall sing to Thee."

And so, on the plain of Rapture to the Beloved, the paths of the Mystics of West and East merge into one.

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As we end these pages on Iran, through which the stream of religious fire has flowed for more than twenty-five hundred years, we turn back again to that mighty figure, who must—beyond all others—be regarded as the Synthesis of Iran, for it was the fire of his devotion which forever flowed through her spirit. As Jackson has very beautifully written, "Zoroaster is the father, the holy prototype of those Wise Men from the East who came and bowed before the new-born Light of the World in the manger cradle of Bethlehem. . . . Though the Greek vanquished the Persian in battle, he still has stories to tell of Magian wisdom—Plato and Pythagoras and other great thinkers are claimed to have emulated the teachings of the Magi. . . . Even the pages of the Koran and the doctrine of Mohammed are not free from the influence of the Faith which they vanquished by the sword.

"The spark of the sacred fire has never been quenched; the holy flame continues to blaze; and the Religion of

Zoroaster still lives on. Yes, and whatever may be the changing fates it will live on so long as there are successors worthy to bear the name of the Master."

And thus, in the great Processional, Zoroaster takes his place among those Immortal Teachers Who have lit such a Fire as may not be put out by armed foes. The blood of the Prophet quenched the fire in Balkh, but its invisible prototype lives on in the Image of the man Zoroaster, one of the Flaming Messengers of that One, Which men call by many Names.



ISLAM

MOHAMMED

THE FAITH OF THE PROPHET





## V

### ISLAM

#### MOHAMMED

**F**IVE times a day, millions of men throughout the world turn their faces towards the direction of the city of Mecca, with its Sacred Mosque, and in accordance with the words of Mohammed, pronounce their prayer to Allah, the one God. Thus has it been daily for thirteen hundred years—and thus shall it probably always be until that Day of Judgment, when Muntazar will Himself come and the faithful will enter the pavillions of Paradise.

For to all sons of Islam, Mecca since time immemorial has been the center of divine portent and has been the city of holy pilgrimage even before the coming of the Prophet. Even in those pre-Islamic days when Mohammed had not yet pronounced the gospel of Submission to the One God, the numerous sects and tribes of Arabia, by common agreement, ceased their strifes and dissensions for four months of the year, and turned their steps across the desert sands to the citadel settled in an embattlement of barren rocks in that strip of austere land called The Hejaz. And as they journeyed to pay their adorations to the Kaaba, these men of Araby may have no doubt recalled the age-old traditions, coming down the centuries, which had marked out this heart of Arabian faith.

Was this desert spot not the cynosure of men since the days of Adam? When the fiery sword of the angel of judgment had driven Adam and Eve out of Paradise, the two were separated, exiled to remote parts of the earth. Eve found herself wandering in the land now Arabia, upon the borders of the Red Sea, and Adam in Ceylon. For two hundred years, repentant and alone, they sought each other, finally to come together on Ararat. Then Adam, in contrition, sent a prayer to the Lord that a shrine, such as he had beheld in his days in Paradise, might be vouchsafed to them for worship. Accepting his repentance and prayer, the Lord permitted His angelic hosts to lower from heaven a veritable double of that shrine in Paradise, around which the celestial legions throng in their devotions. It descended to that spot on earth which was directly below its heavenly counterpart—Mecca itself. Remembering his vision of the angels encircling the sanctuary seven times daily, Adam thereafter encircled the Kaaba seven times each day in prayer, until the day of his death, when it rose once again and was withdrawn by the celestial forces into Paradise.

In this way did Allah first point out to men the site of Mecca as the place chosen by Him, for His center of worship. Once again was the sacredness of this soil manifested—this time as Hagar wandered with her son Ismael through the barren desert. When, as Genesis tells us, the constant sight of the bondswoman and her son had grieved Sarah too sorely, Abraham brought the two as far as the desert and there left them. It was here, between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa, that the son of Hagar,

consumed with thirst, lay dying on the desert sands. In desperation his mother ran seven times from one hill top to another, scanning the cruel sands before her for the signs of a well or spring to save her child. As he lay there, the child in a paroxysm of thirst struck the earth with his feet, and as he did so, there gushed forth a spring. And it is this well which has remained inexhaustible ever since—the Well of ZemZem, which leaped up, upon the site of the future tabernacle. Ismael did not forget the Lord's gift. For Hagar and Ismael remained here, and around the well—God's gift to the desert—a city was founded. Growing to man's estate, Ismael, son of Abraham married a daughter of the ruling chief, and was blessed with the numerous progeny which the Lord had promised Abraham for the bondswoman's child. And from the twelve stalwart sons of Ismael sprang the dwellers of the desert, those passionate, restless men of Araby.

In gratitude for his divine rescue, Ismael decided to construct a sanctuary to God at the very site of the well. He asked the aid of his Father Abraham, the "friend of the Lord." With his own hands, Abraham is said to have labored over this living tribute to the Object of his worship. And when the sanctuary was complete, for the third time the Lord again gave token of his recognition. The Angel Gabriel—that celestial Messenger, who seems to have been the veritable Guardian Angel of Islam—appeared to Abraham and Ismael, bearing with him a small, semi-circular stone. This was the gift of heaven to the sanctuary. Veritably from heaven, this Stone—which was undoubtedly an aerolite—was placed in a corner on the

outer wall in the Mosque. And since that time—for Millenniums, each pilgrim to the sacred city, after marching seven times about the Mosque, as do the angels in Paradise, pressed his lips to the blessed Stone brought by Gabriel. And it is said that the Stone, once pure white, has turned black as it has taken upon itself the sins of the generations of men.

Many centuries after the advent of the Stone, in the fifth year of the Sixth Century, a merchant of Mecca one day was turning his steps towards the Holy Mosque. As he entered the gate, he was accosted by the headsmen of the four most powerful tribes of Araby, who asked him to settle an important problem. The Sacred Stone had been loosed from its place by a recent flood which had threatened the Mosque; now that the Mosque was restored it was necessary to set the Stone back in its shrine. These three each coveted the honor, but unable to decide which of them was entitled to do it, had determined to ask council of the first visitor who passed through the sacred gate. Hearing their story, Mohammed ordered a cloth to be brought. Spreading it, he bid each Sheik take one of the corners and lift it to the level of the shrine; once there, Mohammed himself took the Stone and with his own hands replaced it into the chosen place. And the Sheiks departed equally happy and content. Thus, by a seeming chance, was Mohammed destined to place the Stone in its Shrine, even as Abraham had done before him.

The incident left a strong impression upon Mohammed—and from that day he seems to have been a changed man. He had entered the gates a merchant; when he left,

the seed of a new hope was in his bosom. A native of Mecca, Mohammed had been born there in 571 A.D. This was an important year for the city. It had been called the Year of the Elephant, in token of the attack upon Mecca by Abraha, the Abyssinian viceroy of the Yemen, who descended upon it with army and elephant. Tradition has several versions of the Abyssinian's defeat—one, that countless sparrows dropped stones upon the besieging forces driving them to consternation; another, that a plague of smallpox came upon them and saved Mecca. Thus the year was signally propitious for the sacred city.

Mohammed belonged to the tribe of the Koreish, which traced its descent directly from the son of Ismael. This proud lineage gave them the hereditary right of being custodians of the Mosque and the guardians of the Well of ZemZem, a distinction of unique prestige. For a time, predatory tribes had usurped this honor, but Kussai, the great great grandsire of the Prophet, had courageously won back the right for his people. Mohammed himself, however, was left a poor orphan. His father had died when he was but a few months old, leaving him the very humble inheritance of five camels, a few sheep and one female slave. His mother, who was apparently unable to rear him, gave him over to the care of Halima, the wife of a shepherd of the Bedouin tribe—the Beni Saad, who gave him great care and affection. These years also are said to have left their mark on the future prophet in his language, for this tribe was noted for purity of its speech.

Many were the wonder tales told in after-years by

Halima, of the miracles which attended the childhood of the young Mohammed, while he passed his early years playing in the fields with the Bedouin children. Reverence was paid to him by the moon, and even the sheep and mules bowed before him. From Halima came the story of the visitation of the two Angels—Gabriel and another—when the prophet was but three years of age. Gently laying the young Mohammed on the ground, they removed his heart and cleansed it of the tiny spots of original sin which all men share as their gift from Adam. Then filling his heart with faith and love, they restored it in his bosom with equal tenderness.

Outside of these occasional miracles, the boyhood of Mohammed seems to have been much like that of other Arabian boys, and he apparently suffered from an equal lack of schooling. For often in after-years he mentioned his inability to write or read. He returned to his mother's care at the age of five, and then visited with her, his maternal grandparents in Medina, the city of his future destiny. On the return journey, his mother was stricken with illness and died, leaving him to the loving care of his grandfather. On the latter's death, but a short while later, he became the ward of his uncle, Abu Taleb, whose generous and magnanimous nature filled the boy's years and lingered about him throughout much of his life.

At the age of twelve, Mohammed accompanied his uncle, a caravan trader, to Syria—for the desert fleets journeyed with their wares from Mecca to Syria and Palestine; and Mecca, on the trade route between the Yemen and Syria, profited from these great caravans which

plied their commerce back and forth. It is also credible that on the many caravan journeys that followed, Mohammed must have mingled with Jews and Christians who told him of their faiths. At other times, crossing the bleak, uncompromising expanses of the desert, these silent spaces which challenge the spirit, he may have dwelt long upon the secret of the Invisible One.

The change in his position came with his marriage to Kadija, one of the wealthy widows of Mecca. It happened that Kadija, twice widowed, had wished to send a caravan to Syria, and had placed it in charge of Mohammed. Delighted at his acumen in handling her affairs, she not only paid him handsomely but rather delicately proposed to marry him, although he was fifteen years her junior. Mohammed consented and thereupon became one of the wealthy merchants of Mecca.

But not only wealth came to him through Kadija—throughout her life, she was his faithful comrade, and as he declared, long after her death, “When I was poor, she enriched me; when I was pronounced a liar, she believed in me; when I was opposed by all the world, she remained true to me.”

After his marriage, Mohammed continued his work as a merchant of Mecca. But it was not until destiny directed his steps through the gate of the Kaaba, to replace the Sacred Stone into its shrine, that this belief in his eventual destiny as one of God’s prophets became definitely branded in his mind. Apparently the very touch of the Black Stone had set atremble his being. He, who had been the enterprising merchant of Mecca, now sought

whenever possible the caves and deserts around Mecca in search of solitude. And in these secret places he lifted his voice unto Allah, beseeching Him to impart to His worshipper the task that was before him, for he felt himself God's messenger. In the intensity of these prayers to his God, there came over Mohammed the ecstasies and trances which accompanied him throughout the rest of his life, and during which he received those Revelations which were set down in the Book of Books of Islam, the Koran.

It was in his fortieth year that the Revelation for which he had prayed, finally came to him. It was on the night of Al Kadir, the most holy night of the sacred month of Ramadan—the night when it is believed that the angelic host descends from heaven and walks over the earth, and when the Archangel Gabriel carries to men the decrees of his Master. Seated, as was his frequent custom in these years within a cave on Mount Hira, enwrapped in his mantle which seemed an inseparable part of his revelations, the Prophet heard a voice. Raising his head he saw that the cave was filled with an ineffable glow, and in the midst of dazzling light stood the figure of Gabriel. Trembling with awe before the image of this celestial one, he saw that Gabriel was unrolling a silken scroll and commanding him to read. Mohammed, who had never been taught to read, nevertheless became aware of the meaning of the writings upon the scroll which imparted to him the entire future doctrine of Islam. And with the final words, "Verily thou art the prophet of God, and I am the angel Gabriel"—the effulgent messenger de-



parted, leaving the prophet in the throes of unspeakable fear lest his deluded mind had seen the image of Shaitan the Jinn of darkness, who was goading him to temptation.

Stricken with terror, he fled from the cave back into the arms of Kadija where he imparted to her the Revelation that had come to him. And Kadija, who never failed him, gave him courage and lifted up his spirit assuring him that this was the long-awaited answer to his prayers.

But this did not sufficiently satisfy the searcher. Great depression overcame him after this first vision. A constant doubt lest the vision had been but the temptation of the dark one, possessed him, and drove him to desperation. Often, as he reveals in the Koran, he even contemplated destroying himself. This may be regarded as the period of his great agony. And then, the angel came again, and again testified, "Mohammed, in truth, you are the prophet of God and I am the angel Gabriel." Once again Mohammed hastened to Kadija and once again she sustained him, assuring him that all his life he had tried to follow truth, and that he must not distrust these visitations. And with complete faith she placed herself under the instructions of the Prophet of Allah.

And so, Kadija became the first recruit to the destined army of myriads who came to accept the creed that there was no God but Allah and that Mohammed was his Prophet. Seconding his wife, Mohammed may also have had the reassuring support of Wasaka, his wife's uncle, a man of religious erudition, who is reputed to have translated parts of the Old and New Testaments into Arabic.

Wasaka was a man of many faiths; and is believed to have been first a Jew then a Christian; he had also an unswerving faith in the revelations of the stars, and by their tokens he observed that his niece's husband was marked for a great destiny, verily as a Prophet of Allah.

Thenceforth, in the secrecy which has marked the beginnings of so many faiths, Mohammed sought out his disciples—silently they came to his home by night. For each religion has had its Nicodemuses. In these meetings, the Prophet imparted to them his revelations, preaching his doctrine of the One God. He spoke to them also against idolatry, and talked of the equality of men before God. He set before them the ideal of simple ethics, denouncing usury, drinking, adultery and infanticide. Gradually the number of these first disciples grew, and among them came Abu Bekr, a well-to-do merchant of Mecca, whose prestige attracted several friends. But soon the rumors of these secret meetings spread through Mecca, and men began to mock Mohammed, not the least of the scoffers being his own kin, the Koreish. In the very face of this derision, Mohammed announced to his followers that he had been bidden by revelation to hide his doctrine no longer, but to herald it openly.

Following the command, he invited the members of his tribe to meet him upon Safa Hill. And when they were gathered together he announced his ministry to them, also denouncing idolatry and proclaiming his warning that hell awaited the worshippers of idols. The announcement caused general amusement and scorn among the Koreish. Mohammed, undaunted, felt impelled to continue his

warnings this time even more positively. By then the Koreish, who were the guardians not only of the Kaaba but of its 360 idols as well, found the matter less amusing. This troublesome relative was beginning to get followers, and it was exceedingly uncomfortable for the leaders of the city to have their own kinsman raising his voice against the idols which brought them considerable profit. They thereupon went to Abu Taleb, his uncle, and demanded that, as a member of the Koreish, he deal summarily with Mohammed, or at least let them punish him.

Abu Taleb, who had loved Mohammed as a son, called him and repeated that which had been told to him. To which Mohammed made the reply, which has become a by-word with Islam: "If they would bring me the sun to my right hand, and the moon to my left, in order to force me from my undertaking, verily I would not desist therefrom until the Lord make manifest my cause or I perish in the attempt." Thereupon, because he loved his uncle, he wept deeply. And his uncle, moved as he had always been by this nephew answered, "Depart in peace, nephew. Say whatsoever thou desirest. For, by the Lord, I will not give thee up."

For a time, Mohammed, to save his followers from recriminations, took a house on the Hill of Safa, and there converts were brought to him and he discoursed with them secretly. But soon the names of these followers were noised abroad and they suffered threats and persecution. And the Koreish finally decided to resort to boycott, drawing up a treaty among themselves that they would not deal with any who had intercourse with these new Mos-

lems. The action brought hardship upon the converts, but Mohammed once again was helped by a revelation. It appeared to him in a vision that the agreement of ostracism drawn up by the Koreish, had been devoured by worms and every word had been eaten save the word "Allah." He thereupon went to his uncle and imparted the vision to him, asking him to transmit it to the Koreish with the demand that if it were true, they should dissolve this boycott, and if it were false they could continue it. The treaty, which had been placed in the Kaaba, was thereupon examined and, as the prophet had predicted, the instrument was found to be entirely worm-eaten save for the name of Allah.

Twice during these years of persecution at the advice of the Prophet, some of his followers migrated to Abyssinia, which was under a liberal ruler who received them and permitted them to practice freely their beliefs.

The grief from the constant harassments of his fellow-Meccans, was intensified in these years by the loss of the two closest supporters of Mohammed—Kadija his wife, and his uncle Abu Taleb, which followed each other closely and darkened his fiftieth year. Moreover, the death of his uncle, the one member of the Koreish who had supported him staunchly, removed a restraining factor from the hostility of the Koreish and henceforth the clan intensified their threats.

But soon the way of escape was to be apparent to the Prophet. For some years, in the fervor of transmitting his gospel, Mohammed had mingled with the merchants coming to Mecca from other cities, on their annual pil-

grimage or for the great marketing fairs. Among all of them, he invariably met the same ridicule. But three years before the memorable flight, that marks the beginning of the Moslem Era, he accidentally came upon a group of pilgrims from the neighboring city of Medina. Quite unlike his own kinsmen, these men listened to him with grave attention, and when he had finished his discourse, they made it known to him that the hope of a Prophet—and even more definitely, an Arabian Prophet—was known to their fellowmen of Medina. They had heard it not alone from the Jews of Medina but from the Christians whom they encountered on their journeys. Everywhere secret worshippers were telling of a new saviour who would not be long in coming. This singular destiny, which brought together the Prophet with these anxious souls who awaited their redeemer, determined the entire future course of Islam. For when the pilgrims of Medina returned to their native city, they felt that they had encountered the promised Master. And among their kinsmen they found others equally anxious for this consummation. When the holy month of the pilgrimage once again came around the next year, more of them started out to meet the awaiting Prophet of Allah. And in the caravan station of Akaba, a pledge was agreed upon, whereby the pilgrims of Medina accepted Allah as the One God and Mohammed as His Prophet. Another year passed, and the roll of converts from Medina increased. Again Akaba was the place of meeting, and here Mohammed, realizing that his forces in Medina were now secured, determined upon the flight to that city.

In April of the year 622, Mohammed began to send his followers ahead of him to that City of Promise, which was about 280 miles distant from Mecca in a verdant oasis. This did not please the Koreish. Though they despised the Moslems, they nevertheless preferred to have these converts among them where they could watch over them and molest them when possible, rather than beyond their reach in a rival city. Attempts to stop the escapes were made and eluded, until Mohammed had sent on about 150 of his faithful followers.

Only Mohammed and his two close followers, Abu Bekr and Ali his cousin remained. The Koreish prepared to put a stop to the escape of Mohammed, when news of it was brought to him, and by midnight with Abu he fled to a cave on Mount Thaur, leaving his cousin Ali to join them in Medina. This is the last poignant moment in the harassed first decade of Islam. Through many days and nights, the two waited in hiding, while the pursuit was close. But here, as throughout his life, the Prophet of Islam showed the courage of exaltation. "We are not two here," he reminded Abu. "There is a third among us—God." And when the way permitted, they set out stealthily northward towards Medina. Before entering the city, Mohammed stopped at Kuba, where he awaited for fourteen days. And only when he received word that he was awaited and would be received, did he start his camel forward. On June 28, 622—on a Friday which henceforth became the Sabbath of Islam in remembrance of this occasion—the Prophet entered the city of Medina upon his camel. His followers awaited eagerly and, lest

he show any preferences, he permitted the camel to go at will. And the place where it halted and knelt down, was chosen as the eventual site of the mosque of Medina and the dwelling place of the prophet. And here Mohammed took up his labors in the Name of Allah.

The arrival of the Prophet in Medina changed his destiny. Soon the men of Medina were bringing to him their dissensions to adjust, asking his council and before long Mohammed had assumed the role of the veritable ruler of the city. No longer was he the seer, somewhat furtively preaching to men the doctrine of salvation. Now he takes on the mantle of a pope and a warrior. He used the Word of the Revelation where necessary but when needed, he also supplemented it with the Sword. Nor were his laws difficult to follow—already, from the beginning of his administration of Medina, he set down the five rules which he later extended over the whole of Araby. First, the absolute Monotheism which rings with true nobility constantly through his doctrine and which constantly disarms those who denounce the motive of his teaching. Next, he forbade theft, adultery, infanticide, slander, and the disobedience of the acts of the Prophet in anything that was just.

In the next year Mohammed had consolidated his rule, and by 624 he was ready to take up the sword for Allah. The first task which Mohammed set himself was the defeat of the Koreish and the eventual conquest of the Sacred Kaaba for the One God. First, in the series of battles between the Koreish and the Moslems was at Bedr, on the caravan route. There, 300 Moslems, fortified by a

rapt determination, and with the fire of faith in their souls, attacked 1,000 men. Here for the first time—and because of this Bedr is so important—Islam revealed that it was impelled by some unconquerable purpose, so inexorable, that the numbers of foes mattered little against this Awesome Invisible Reality which pressed on the cohorts of Allah.

One is minded here of the remarkable strategy of Chenghiz Khan, of whom it is related that, scorning the belief that it was disastrous to burn one's bridge behind one, he deliberately lit fires behind his own army. Thus, his men had but one impelling direction—forward! In a manner, it was thus with the legions of Allah—behind them were the threatening fires of the inferno of the Idolatrous. Before them, perhaps death, but the Paradise of the Faithful! Against such a host of impassioned warriors, who battled for Immortality, foes remained paralyzed. And so the first battle of Islam—Bedr—proclaimed the quality of Islam's warriors and already struck the note of portent for the future victories of the Prophet.

The rapt certitude of the Mohammedans virtually transfixed their enemies, whose idols were many but not often reliable. This is synthesized in an incident related of the battle of Bedr. It is said that in between encounters during the fray, the Prophet sat down to rest beneath a tree and dozed off. When he awoke, one of the Meccans, Durthar, stood before him with a sword. About to run the weapon through his body, Durthar scornfully asked, "And who will help you now?" To which Mohammed answered, "Allah," with such resoluteness that the Mec-



can dropped his sword. Whereupon Mohammed seized it and standing now over Durthar, repeated the same question, "Who will help you, Durthar?" "No one," Durthar replied in resignation. And Mohammed is believed to have thereupon freed him as a witness to Allah's mercy.

The following two years the enemies met again, with the Meccans coming out against the Moslems—once at Mount Ohod, where the Meccans had somewhat the best of the battle. And again the following year when an alliance of the Koreish, the Bedouins and the Jews in Khaiber and within Medina, combined in a siege, which finally was abandoned after fourteen days, because of the suspicions of the allies against each other. This left the Jews within Medina a complete prey to the Moslems who virtually annihilated them.

Thenceforth the scene of war shifts. The Moslem becomes the aggressive force for Allah. First taking advantage of the annual armistice to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, Mohammed makes an agreement with the Koreish for a ten years' truce called the Peace of Hodabiya, because it was enacted on this site immediately outside the sacred city. This truce Mohammed regarded as a vast victory—because it definitely established his equality with the Meccans—a moral victory which found echo throughout Arabia. Moreover, it gave Mohammed two possibilities—first to press on his victories against the Jews, whom he now regarded as definite foes of Islam. And in the second place to execute a plan which he had formulated—to extend Islam by sending envoys to the Rulers of Per-

sia, Rome, Syria, asking them to come under the fold of Islam. The attack against the Jews in the stronghold of Khaiber was eminently a successful victory. But it held the one signal incident which eventually took its toll: After the defeat of the Jews, one of the women of the city eager to avenge the assassination of her kinsmen, prepared a meal of lamb for the Prophet and his viziers. No sooner had Mohammed eaten a little of it, when he spat it out, realizing it was poisoned. But to some of his men it proved fatal—and Mohammed himself claimed that its effects never left him. It is believed that this poison in his system brought on the actual death of Mohammed several years later.

On his return to Medina, seeing a vision that he entered Mecca in victory, Mohammed felt the time had come to bring Mecca to Allah. In accordance with the Hodabiya truce, Mohammed with 2,000 men took his annual pilgrimage to Mecca the following year. During the three days of grace, a skirmish between some of the men gave the Prophet his reason for withdrawing from the city, and returning to Medina to prepare for his great victory. And then with a suddenness which disarmed the Meccans, he returned to the gates of the holy city reaching there by night with his army. As they encamped at the very threshold of the city, Mohammed ordered his men to light bonfires—and 10,000 fires of the faithful greeted the unexpected Koreish. Sending out their headman to deal with the Prophet, the former returned the following day informing his people that the host was a great one, and that it would be futile to resist; that Mecca would

be saved if it succumbed docilely without bloodshed. The Koreish accepted the inevitable and thereupon Mohammed, leading his people, entered as conqueror the city of Mecca whence he had fled ten years earlier a fugitive with 150 followers. It is difficult to find the parallel of this event in history. Entering the Kaaba, Mohammed struck from their places the 360 idols and announced the consecration of the shrine to Allah. After this victory, until his death two years later, Mohammed saw tribe after tribe accept the faith of Islam. Thus Arabia bowed to the Prophet of Allah.

When the sacred month of Ramadan had again come around the next year, Mohammed went upon his pilgrimage as to the city of the One God. With him now were 100,000 worshippers. And as they gathered about him, the Prophet, for the last time spoke to them and in effect synthesized for them his doctrine: "Ye people hearken to my words, for I know not whether after this year I shall ever be amongst you again." He admonished them to regard the lives and the property of each other, as sacred and inviolable, for to every man had the Lord ordained a share of his inheritance. And even a testament which denied a man this share was not lawful. He bade his followers guard their children, for "the child belongeth to the parents and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned." He then repeated to them the duties of men and women to each other in marriage. And of men, he demanded that, so long as their wives refrained from any breach of conjugal faith, they were to be treated kindly and clothed. "Treat your women well," he bid them,

“for they have no power over anything for themselves. Ye have verily taken them on security of God.” He also bade his followers to treat their slaves kindly. And finally reminded them that every Moslem was a brother to every other Moslem and that all must be on the same equality.

By the time he returned to Medina he felt himself weaker and the poison again troubling him. Not long before his death he went out by midnight to the burial fields where lay the men who had died at Ohod; there and in the other burial grounds he prayed for those gone. In his final days, when he realized that he would not recover, he expressed three wishes—that Arabia should not admit pagans again to its midst; that foreign envoys should be received with utmost courtesy; and finally, that his people should hold to the Koran. His last hours were spent in the arms of Ayesha the wife who, since the death of Kadija, had come to take first place in his affections. And in her arms he pronounced his final words, “Lord grant me pardon. Join me to the companionship on high. Eternity in Paradise. Pardon my sins! Grant me the companionship on high!”

From the Hejira—the flight of the Prophet—to his death, twenty years had elapsed! In two decades, the faith of Islam had grown from a burning belief in one man’s heart to the religion of multitudes. And the path of its conquest was not yet ended. To this achievement of a single man—there is perhaps no parallel in history! To grasp its extent, one must look upon the Arabia to which the Prophet was born, and that which, dying, he left.

In that quadrangular expanse of Asia which is Arabia, the brutal red area of endless sands repelled for centuries even the adventurous and the curious. Only along the fringes did the great caravan fleets pursue their cumbersome and perilous journeys to and fro. And dense secrecy still veils the early history of that stark, parched region where, for 1,400 miles, never a river cools the burning spaces. Occasionally nature relents, and out of the red hostile space, a bit of lush green rises around a spring: the oasis. But often, the apparent line of trees in the distance is naught but a mirage taunting the desolate wanderers, and receding as they approach its beckoning loveliness. In all this starkness, only one strip of land—Yemen, called Arabia the Happy, lies watered by streams and yielding its fragrant desert fruits.

Against such an implacable nature, men, too, grow implacable; nursing deep-rooted hates and loves; reckless of fate—since none may parry with the inexorable ways of destiny, always intense in joy or in sorrow. Yet, even as the desert yields its occasional verdant stream so in the nature of these Arabs, passionate and swift to fight, there would gush forth the unexpected tenderness, a lyric sentiment and love of song and beauty.

Nor is it surprising that, traveling these expanses and looking up at the endless cupola of sky, where sun and moon and stars eternally swayed, the Arabs began to do reverence to these heavenly bodies. These companions of their silent journeys, and even the sand and stones themselves, took on personalities. And since these entities controlled their very lives, they must be propitiated, at times

even by human blood. Thus was the religion of ancient Arabia born—the Sabeian worship of the heavenly bodies.

The dark annals of Ancient Arabia, prior to the advent of Islam, are still to be known; but by the time of the birth of the Prophet, numerous tribes dotted the Arabian spaces. These were the men who traced their lineage back to Shem, the son of Noah; to Ismael, son of Abraham, and other biblical forebears. Between these separate tribes no bond of unity prevailed—but an almost savage tie of the clan bound men of each tribe together, under their chief, the Sheikh. Blood flowed quickly between tribes—and even the mutual fear of their common enemy, inexorable nature, could not stay these men from an eternal warfare and rapine. The tribes were of two kinds—those who had already gathered into settlements, like the Koreish of Mecca; and the Bedouins, or nomads, who roamed the lands, seeking their living. By the Fifth Century, growing trade in the East had brought a few restraints over these unbridled Arabian folkways. The caravans laden with wares were journeying across the landways between Yemen, Syria and Jerusalem; Mecca, located conveniently upon these great overland routes, was already the center of an annual fair where men foregathered to interchange the products of Asia. Hence, there was need to safeguard this growing traffic. And since Mecca was also the site of the sacred Kaaba—the ends of religion and profit were happily combined. It was agreed among these fighting, restless men of Araby that for four months peace would reign among them. Then they could make their pilgrimage to worship at the sacred

shrine and kiss the Sacred Stone; they could propitiate their divinities—and they could also ply their trade. Blood might flow before and after this truce, but the four months' immunity was maintained.

By the time of Mohammed's birth, the growing intercourse with other peoples had also brought changes into the religion of Arabia. In addition to the religion of the stars, or to nature fetishes, men had come to hear of other worship. They had come to learn of the faith of the Jews, and some tribes had turned to the Prophets of Israel. They heard also of Jesus Christ, and had even encountered some strange anchorites of the desert who starved in the name of this new faith. And some of Araby's tribes even accepted this new teaching. But as a whole, it was a kaleidoscope of credos that prevailed. In order to serve this variable congregation, the Kaaba in Mecca had come to contain a motley array of Gods. Here, for each day of the Arabian year, were foregathered 360 idols, each added to the coterie of images, as some tribe or other had appropriated a god of their neighbor while they wandered across the caravan routes. The exact functions of these numerous gods were never specified, but by general consent Hobal, the red agate rain-god of Syria, had taken on the sovereign role,—a natural selection in lands which were parched for rain. Around him were Lat, the bright moon; Manat, the dark moon; and Uzsa, the partly dark and light moon—three idols specially venerated by the Koreish. By some unexplainable way, Abraham, Ismael, Mary and Jesus were also here—but they had long since lost their original identifications and now, invested with

magic symbols, entered into the company of divine necromancers. Mercury and Jupiter and other heavenly bodies, here had their images, together with other anthropomorphic images.

Deep superstitions clouded the days of the Arabs—they were beset with fears not only of their gods, but also of the Jinns, elemental creatures, who could harass the lives of men, and formed a numerous Satanic brood, all of whom demanded propitiation.

Stark existence had brought stark folkways into Araby. The continuous warfare had resulted in a plethora of women, and no enviable lot was theirs in a society which regarded them as a burden. The birth of a girl was a misfortune and the murder of girl infants was common. Woman was a chattel and a slave.

#### THE FAITH OF THE PROPHET

Only a rapt, indefatigable genius could bring together into a whole these fractious elements of an untamed obstinate people. And this genius was furnished by Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam. By the end of his days, he saw an Arabia united around a common faith, the submission to Allah. The 360 idols had crumbled in the dust, and the tribes of the desert were offering their prayer to the One Being. Into the ranks of these people, Mohammed had infused a code of ethics—perhaps rough-hewn and severe, but it was for a severe epoch. Theft, intemperateness, cruelty to animals, murder, infanticide were forbidden; a new protection was offered for women;



an ideal had come to the men of Araby, in the Prophet of Islam; and above them there was ever the image of an inexorable God who would punish the godless as he would protect the righteous. Islam had become not only a faith but a nation.

Hence, this single man—for it was the intense immovable fire of his conviction which had accomplished this miracle—transformed the numberless warring tribes into one Arabia ready to place all their strength into the battle for Allah. In the singular achievement of the man Mohammed, we are reminded of the legend of one of God's messengers; when he spoke to multitudes, each man thought that he spoke to him personally and in his own tongue. This legend symbolizes each messenger of truth—for so long as humanity is infinite in its variations, so long must the vehicle of truth be infinite. No more extraordinary manifestation of this flexibility is evident than in Mohammed—his was the terrific mission simultaneously to knit together the social fabric of Arabia and to give it the catalysis of a common faith. And in two decades this heroic achievement was a reality. Little wonder that Mohammed trembled as he read the silken scroll of Gabriel! The stupendous vista of his mission must have swept over him like a terrific torrent—yet he could end his days repeating, "God is himself the witness of what He hath sent down to thee; in His knowledge hath He sent it down to thee."

What, then, was this doctrine that Mohammed gave to the sons of Araby?

The term Islam means submission to God—and this

submissiveness was the mark of each follower of the Prophet. A six-pointed doctrine of faith was commanded to which each Moslem must subscribe—first, the belief in the One God Allah. Second of the creeds was the acknowledgement of the existence of the Angels, for Islam presupposed an angelic legion of whom Gabriel and Michael were the great archangels, and Gabriel was the messenger of the Lord. But there were other angels, eight of whom “bore up the throne of the Lord,” and nineteen guarded the Hell-fire of Islam. In the invisible realms, disclosed by Allah, there was another group of beings who stood midway between the angels and men—these were the Jinns who sometimes were virtuous and sometimes Satanic. For it so happened that there were some among them who had become converted to Islam and held themselves Mohammedans. In the ranks of the unconverted Jinns was an arch-Jinn, Shaitan who was the devil himself, and who accompanied by his Shaiyatani, performed the role of the demon. The belief in this invisible group of beings, who had been created from fire, was inherent in Islam. Their uses were manifold if one possessed the power to hold them—and was it not Solomon who in his wisdom used even Jinns to build the great Temple?

The third pillar was a belief in the Koran, as the Revelation of Allah through his Prophet, Mohammed. Mohammed did not claim for the Koran that it was the only revealed gospel. “To each age its Book,” says the Koran. Hence Islam recognized as earlier revelations, the Torah, transmitted to Moses; Psalms, given by the Lord to

David; the Evangel, transmitted through Christ, and finally—and most important—the Koran given through Mohammed. For the Moslems, the Koran is so holy a revelation, that they believe if every copy on earth were lost, it still would remain. Because the angels guard the arch-type of the Book in heaven and, as they revealed it part by part to Mohammed, so they would again reveal it part by part, should it ever be wiped away.

The Koran was a series of admonitions comprising 114 Suras or chapters of varied length. These had no definite relationship to each other but were the separate revelations given to Mohammed from time to time, generally during his trances. Since the Prophet himself is not known to have been able to write, they are believed to have been taken down separately by his listeners, sometimes on palm leaves, or stones. It was not until after his death that his immediate successor, Abu Bekr, ordered these separate inscriptions to be compiled. Differences as to the form of some of these revelations arose, and once again the third successor of Mohammed, Omar, had the Koran recompiled in a version which was declared authentic. Every copy remaining in its previous edition was destroyed. Hence the Koran remains throughout Islam in the version accepted by Omar the Caliph.

Belief in the Prophets was an essential of the Mohammedan worshipper. Of the Prophets, there were no less than several hundred thousand of varying degrees; but chief of these were twenty-eight, before the advent of the greatest of them, Mohammed. Twenty-two of these were reckoned from the Old Testament, three from

the New Testament, and Alexander the Great was also included in this Prophetic company. Mohammed was the last and the greatest Prophet and succeeded to this august processional which included Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ.

That the soul was judged after death—and convicted to Hell or Paradise, was an inherent belief in Islam. And, according to the Koran, Paradise was a garden, unequalled in the pleasures it offered the faithful, while Hell was dire in its horrible tortures for infidels. But, both the spirit of Heaven and Hell, would rise up on that day of Resurrection which Mohammed predicted would still come. Thus speaks the Koran of this region of the dead.

“These are they who shall approach near unto God. They shall dwell in gardens of delight. (There shall be many of the former religions; and few of the last.) Reposing on couches adorned with gold and precious stones; sitting opposite to one another thereon, are youths who shall continue in their bloom forever, shall go around about them to attend them with goblets and beakers and a cup of flowing wine. Their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be distorted; and with fruits of the sort they shall choose, and the flesh of birds of the kinds they shall desire; and there shall accompany them fair damsels, having large black eyes, resembling pearls hidden in their shells; as a reward for that which they have wrought. They shall not hear therein any vain discourse or any charge of sin; but only the salutation: Peace! Peace! And the companions of the right hand (how happy shall the companions of the right

hand be) shall have their abode among the lote-trees free from thorns, and trees of Mauz, loaded regularly with their produce from top to bottom; under an extended shade near a flowing water and amidst fruits in abundance, which shall not fail nor shall be forbidden to be gathered; and they shall repose themselves in lofty beds. Verily we have created the damsels of Paradise by a peculiar creation; and we have made them virgins, beloved by their husbands of equal age with them; for the delight of the companion of the right hand. There shall be many of the former religions and many of the latter.

“And the companions to the left hand (how miserable shall the companions of the left hand be) shall dwell among burning winds and scalding water, shall be under a shade of black smoke neither cool nor agreeable. For they enjoyed the pleasures of life before this, while on earth, and obstinately persisted in a heinous wickedness; and they said, ‘After we have died and become dust and bones, shall we surely be raised to life? Shall our forefathers also be raised to life with us?’ Say, verily, both the first and the last shall be surely gathered together by judgement at the prefixed time of a certain day. Then ye, O men, who have erred and denied the resurrection as a falsehood shall surely eat of the fruit of the tree of Zakim and shall fill their bellies with it and ye shall drink boiling water, and ye shall drink as a thirsty camel drinketh. This shall be their entertainment on the day of judgement.”

Last in the six pillars of Islam, was the belief in the Divine Decrees.

Having committed the unfailing credo to his heart, the son of Islam had certain duties to perform to his Lord. These were not difficult—and in fact, in point of simplicity, the rule of Islam is almost unequalled. First it was enjoined that a Moslem must ever repeat the creed, “There is no God but the One God and Mohammed is his Prophet.”

And five times a day, in response to the call of the Muezzin, turning to the Sacred Mosque at Mecca, he was to recite the prescribed prayer. In the first years of Mohammed’s ministry, the devotees were instructed to turn to Jerusalem but he later changed this to the Sacred Mosque at Mecca. Certain gestures were to accompany the prayer—first the ministrant had to raise his two hands to the lobes of his ears and fold them over his abdomen, thus implying that he raised himself beyond the earthly habits of the day and presented himself before Allah as His slave. Then gazing at the ground, the worshipper recalled to himself that he was but molded from earth. Then bending himself at right angles he invoked peace to Allah, and prostrating himself on the ground struck his forehead upon the earth, reciting his final words of praise to God.

Charity was also one of the prescribed virtues of the faithful—from the rich a certain amount was exacted from his earnings for the poor. And of all families during Ramadan, the sacred month, it was commanded that the head of each house should give food and drink to the ones in need.

But the month of Ramadan itself was a holy month,

and during the entire time, fasting from morning to sunset was commanded. Last of the duties of the faithful Moslem was to make a pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime to the Sacred Mosque at Mecca and to walk seven times about the sanctuary and kiss the Black Stone.

Among the other commands of the Moslem, was a forbiddance to touch intoxicating drinks or to eat the flesh of swine, for Mohammed like Moses, remembered the evil of excesses in the heat of the desert.

Upon these austere commands, Mohammed saw his kingdom of Allah growing. Constituting himself the sovereign, he saw the precincts of his sway extending over all Arabia. Nor was it surprising that he held his people. A splendid appearing man, an able administrator, a persuasive leader—he himself set an example of great simplicity in his constant labor, his simple, even frugal, existence. He has been reproached for polygamy and for permitting polygamy to the followers of Islam. But it must be remembered that to his epoch and his people multiplicity of wives was no sin, if a man could support them. And hence he only accepted an established social tenet. Wise man that he was, he may perhaps have prescribed polygamy as the least of many evils which might have even the more humiliated woman, in a society in which she was long a chattel, and in which she outnumbered men. He himself married many times—even more than the four permitted to the usual Moslem. But it may be noted that he remained entirely true to Kadija, the wife and helper of his early years of ministry, although she was fifteen years his senior. Not till her death, did he

marry the young Ayesha, only a girl. She was the favored wife, on whom he leaned even at the last hours of his life.

During his years many revelations are accorded in the life of the Prophet—none however, more revealing than his famous "Night's Journey." In this mystic experience, Mohammed told of being aroused by the Angel Gabriel who appeared before him upon a pure white steed. And only when the steed, on which each Prophet in turn had ridden, realized this was also a Prophet of God, did he permit Mohammed to mount him. Speeding through the air, Mohammed stopped not even at the call of three beings who tried to arrest him, and who would have turned Arabia it is said to Judaism or Christianity. Twice the horse stopped in midair and prostrated himself—once above Sinai, and again above Bethlehem. Arriving at Jerusalem he encountered all the Prophets who had been before him, and greeted them. Thereupon a ladder was lowered from heaven which he ascended, rising up through the nine succeeding Paradises where sat the great Ecclesiastic Fathers.

After his death, Islam continued its uninterrupted destiny—and the flame of proselytizing fired his successors. First to succeed Mohammed as the Caliph was Abu Bekr, the faithful follower of his life and the father of Ayesha. It was Abu who was the first to compile the Koran. Three close friends of Mohammed succeeded to the Caliphate—Omar, who revised the Koran, and also began the militant conquests of the armies of Allah over Syria and Persia. Othman and Ali Nuh both sons-in-law of the Prophet succeeded in turn. The latter, however,



was assassinated and thenceforth Islam was divided into many sects. Caliphates succeeded each other, some taking the seat of the Caliph to Damascus, thence to Bagdad, and eventually into Spain, Egypt, India and North Africa.

Various differences appeared, although the Moslems remained one in their consecration to Allah, to his Prophet, and to the Koran. But there are about 79 sects among them—ranging from the orthodox of the faith, the Sunni, who are mostly among the Turks, to the Shia and Sufi sects, those pure mystics who may be found mostly in Persia and India.

Perhaps no founder of a religion has been heaped with greater revilements outside his followers, than has Mohammed. Faiths which forgot their own bloodshed in the name of God, denounced him for raising the sword. Civilizations which have sanctioned plural marriages by the expedient of divorce, expressed horror that he permitted polygamy, although it actually provided the one protection then possible for the women of Araby. Theologians have questioned the sincerity of his revelations. But those who have studied the Koran must perceive in these articulations, an anxiety of heart, an authenticity of conscience, which denies imposture. His own experiences during these revelations, as described by Muir, were two-fold. Sometimes Gabriel appeared to him and addressed him as one man to another. Sometimes, however, he heard a ringing of a bell, and a piercing of his heart which seemed to rend him as if into pieces. This description rings as true as do the confessions of the fiery heart-rending experiences of mystics of all times.

Certainly the greatest testimony for the Prophet of Islam is the thirteen centuries which have flowed by, and the two hundred millions of men who have found in His word their one guidance toward the Lord. Max Müller has wisely said, "There was never a false religion, unless one wishes to call a child a false man." And need one answer the critics of Mohammed—is he not best answered daily by the prayers of two hundred million men? For, facing Mecca, they prostrate themselves in remembrance of Allah, and in gratitude to Mohammed His Prophet, and pronounce, "There is no other God besides Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet." It is a daring man, indeed, who would venture to set his word against two hundred million!

Perhaps no more magnificent expression of the full significance of the voice of Islam will ever be written than Carlyle's heroic words: "To the Arab nation it (the voice of the Prophet) was as a birth from darkness into light. Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; a hero-prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe; see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable; the small has grown world-great; within one century afterwards, Arabia is at Granada on this hand and at Delhi on that. Glancing in valor and splendor and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a great section of the world. Belief is life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul elevating, great as soon as it believes. These Arabs—the man Mohammed, and that one century—is it not as if a spark had

fallen, one spark in a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand. But lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven high, from Delhi to Granada. I said the great man was always as lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, then they too would flame."

And as with Mohammed, so with all Flaming Seekers of East and West, Heroes who came and those who are to be. Each in turn kindles a light by which man may read the pages of an Eternal Book; a light by which man may find his way in the night-crossing, as he journeys out towards the Morning Star.



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